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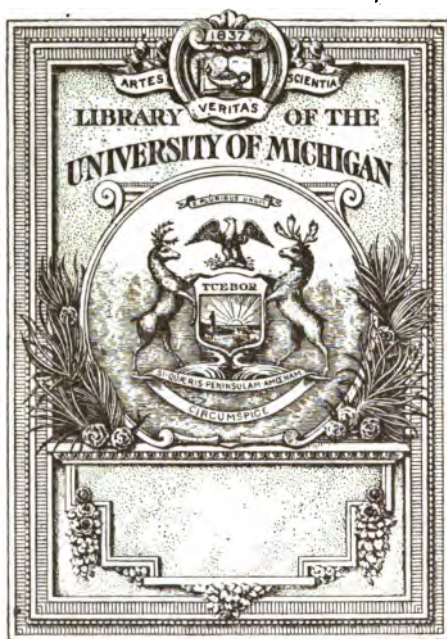
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THE BEST PEOPLE

BY

ANNE WARWICK, pseud.

AUTHOR OF

"THE UNPRETENDERS," "VICTORY LAW,"

"THE CHALK LINE," ETC.

Granston, Mrs. Ruth

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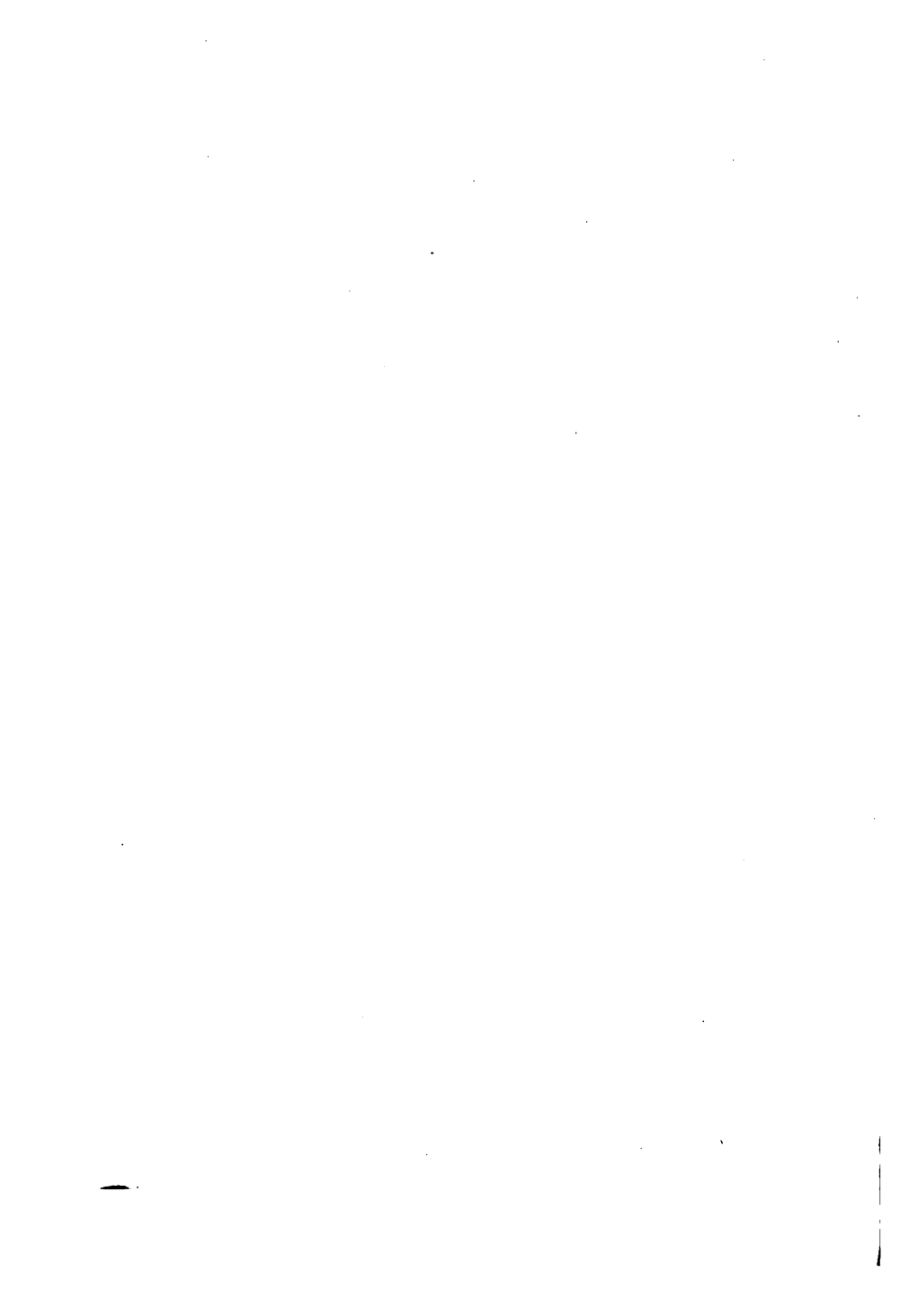
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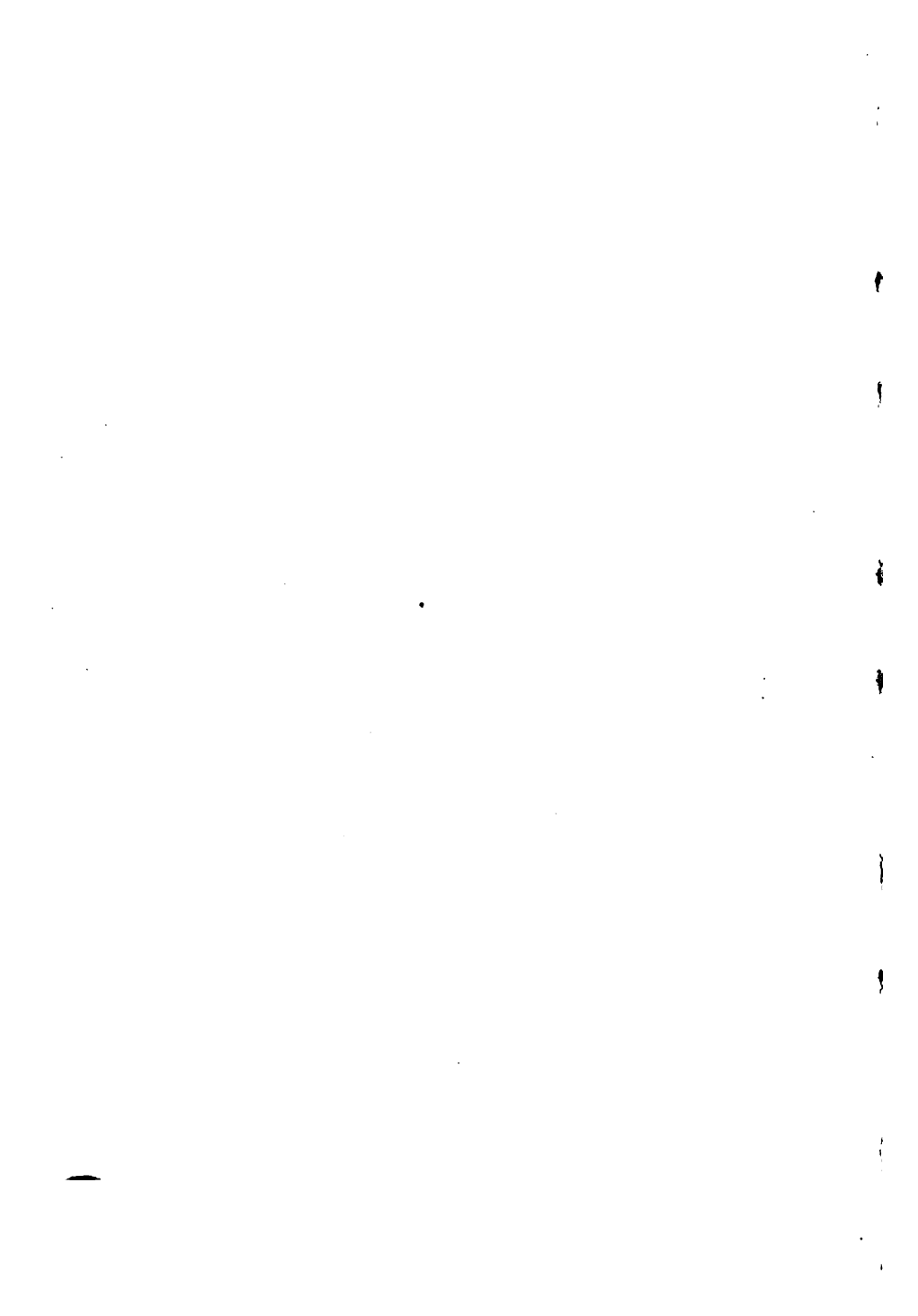
TO
MARY

*"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and
in her tongue is the law of kindness."*

341948



THE BEST PEOPLE



THE BEST PEOPLE

En Route, Overland Limited.
August 10, 19—.

Bumble dear, I wish I could say yes. But I can't—it's quite impossible. You're the best friend I have, and I'm devoted to you; but not in a sentimental way. And I don't want to be married again; to anybody—not for ages. At twenty-six one could hardly **expect** to remain a widow indefinitely, I suppose; but there's heaps of time, and so much I want to do, before I think of all that again.

This quiet year away from home, since James died, has been the very thing for me. Out here on his sister's ranch, a thousand miles from my familiar Brinnsville, I've had a chance to get things in perspective—to have a look at life in review. And an unsatisfactory patchwork I find it, Bumble. Oh, of course a marvellous childhood; first, those dancing green years in the country,

near you; then the colour and adventure of travel, while Dad was establishing his famous International Institutes, round the world. But finally, caught and confined within the commonplace routine of school and college. And then—"she married very well."

James, the romantic "childhood companion," appeared at the strictly psychological moment of Commencement; when sentiment of all sorts fills the air, and any eligible of good health and adequate income is haloed with the chivalry of a Lochinvar. Wherefore, Brinnsville again, after fifteen years of varied experience; and I thought it would be lovely to go back to live in one's childhood home of dim, delightful memories, and be with you and Glory and my other dear old pals, once more.

What did I, as a grown-up woman, know of life through the microscope of the small town? And how, I wonder now, did I get through three years of it—with dear, good, uninspiring James to play *vis à vis*, in the

chain of bridge dinners, dancing clubs, vaudeville, and charity bazaars, that make up what *Fanchette* of the *Brinnsville Beacon*, so aptly describes as "Our Social Whirl"!

But now I know—only too well. And my first plan, since this year of widowhood and browsing meditation, is to go to the other end of the earth from Brinnsville. Oh, I know it's my home, and I was born in it; but I hate and despise it—there! Now aren't you glad I won't marry you? The place you've cherished and worked for, surveyed and parked and replanned, till it's really a wonder, aesthetically.

But oh Bumble, socially, intellectually, it's forever small-town Middle-West: a "Main Street" town, devoted to the "movies" and ladies' card parties and church fairs—where the women beg thousands for War Relief, and then go home and tear one another to pieces; and the men tell interminable anecdotes, or make silly compliments about one's hair and eyes, and call it conversation.

No, my dear; no more Brinnsville. If you could open up the Brinnsville mind, as you did South Elm Street, develop a new point of view, and set out some nice fresh ideas—in people like Lily Moore or Henry Dawson, for example . . . But never again do I sit through an evening of Henry's lim-ericks and heavy languishing; or lunch off Lily's latest grievance at the Woman's Club.

Do you remember how when Marie Taylor was elected President, Lily wouldn't speak to Marie and Glory and the rest of us, till we'd put her on the Children's Hospital Board?

I'm through with it all, Bumble: the provincial concentration on petty things, personal interests, "getting ahead." I want to branch out and meet people of the real world, the world I peeped at as a child, when Dad and mother took me with them, on Dad's journeyings over the earth.

How they could come back, after that richly varied interval, and settle down again contentedly in *Brinnsville*! But they weren't

of the world, really, my blessed parents. They were dears, and I adored them; but you know, Bumble, they were just a little prejudiced and strict about things. They would disapprove entirely of what I'm going to do now. So would poor prudent James.

But I'm my own mistress, and I intend to—I give you three guesses! You'd never imagine, so here it is: I'm going to Japan, alone!

Yes, I am. I'm on my way now. I left the ranch yesterday, with Hattie and Jean to chaperone me as far as San Francisco. We arrive to-morrow, and Saturday I sail!

Think of it, Bumble—but you can't as I do. I want to laugh and cry, and hug somebody. An adventure, after all these stereotyped years!

It came about quite simply. Just as I'd made up my mind never to sink back into that Brinnsville rut, I got a letter from Eloise Lynd. She was my room-mate at school in France; the daintiest, most be-

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witching creature—tiny, with blue eyes and black hair. And such *chic*! We all adored her.

Well, now she's married to Rodney Lynd, second secretary of the American Embassy in Tokio. And she wrote me all about it—a fascinating existence it must be: court life, cosmopolitan society, and the spell of Japan, all in one. And the best of it, Eloise says, will be the Coronation in November. She described the gorgeous ceremonies, costumes, and absorbing preparations; and every second sentence was, "but if only you could see it for yourself."

So all at once I thought, why not? I'm free, I have five thousand a year and no encumbrances (like a matrimonial advertisement!), and here's the very opportunity I've been looking for: to turn my back on the Lily Moores and Henry Dawsons, and meet real people—individuals, women of charm and originality, men of ideas and execution. Why men like you, Bumble dear. But alas,

there's only one of you in Brinnsville. I need a whole society.

And I have the sweetest memories of Japan. My first kimono was made and given me by the little Japanese schoolgirls my own age; grey-blue, with a rose sash, and they sent a funny little letter, all apologies and broken English compliments, written on pale flowered rice paper, and addressed "To Our Dear Nancy."

I have it still; in the same lacquered box with pictures of myself and two dearest playmates: Myoki, an exiled Corean princess, and O Hari San, our cook!

Heigho! I suppose official society in Tokio will be rather different from those days; but I can't imagine a life combining more interesting or varied elements. And it will be so splendid to see Eloise. I'm going to surprise her—just drop down out of the sky. It will be more fun than cabling, and the whole thing has been spontaneous, on the spur of the moment.

Poor Hattie is speechless. Being James's

sister, she naturally thinks a voyage should be planned two years ahead, prayed over and minutely arranged, from Baedeker to boot-trees. She can't get used to this "haphazard fashion of snatching up a steamer trunk and a letter of credit, and departing for the Antipodes."

But she's been sweet to me, and Tom insisted she should come to San Francisco—and my darling Jean. She is such a duck, Bumble: seven, and two front teeth out, and the most adorable grin. She's the one child I ever coveted for my very own.

So here we are, rushing towards the Pacific. And I hope I won't be sea-sick, and I do wish I might have seen you to say good-bye. But it's better we shouldn't, so long as—you don't think I'm heartless, do you, Barry? I've rattled along about my own affairs and plans, but indeed I've not forgotten your beautiful letter. And I do wish I might have answered differently.

You've been a dear to me, ever since the days of our enchanted wood; when I was the

Ruddy Red Queen of all the creatures, and you my favourite Bumble-Bee. And I always count on you, and on telling you everything, and on our being the best of good, comfortable friends. But that's all. So please put the marrying idea out of your head, once and forever.

How I shall miss you and Glory! If only you could come with me. You're far and away too fine for Brinnsville, though I understand how you feel about it, as the land your people settled, and have owned for so long. And I don't wonder they want you for Mayor and Bank President and everything, after all you've done for the town.

As for Glory, plucky angel, I could weep every time I think of her: shut up in that stuffy smelter office, with nothing to look forward to but debts and her poor father's bills from that ruinous sanitarium. She who of all women should have had freedom, and exquisite surroundings, and the children she adores, to complete her splendid personality. It's tragic.

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Do look after her more than ever, won't you? It's rather rare to find three people as different as we are, yet who've stayed friends since pinafore days.

Oh, and you'll go often to see Aunt Judy? You're such pals, and she'll miss me more than any one; and you know Aunt Judy says you have "just lots of sense—for a man!" How I hope she'll walk again. Dr. Winter thinks it may come.

I must say good-bye, I suppose. Though I'd like to maunder along the rest of the day, giving you final messages. Kiss the hounds you're taking care of so angelically. I do hope "T.R." won't get in too many fights. Turning the hose on him is the best thing. And I told you about Seraphine's rheumatism—my dear old dogs! I must stop this, or I'll be snivelling.

Good-bye, old Bumble. Be prepared for quantities of letters, you know. There'll be all sorts of wonders—the Fair, and Hawaii that I've never seen, and then the East!

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It will be glorious, won't it? The colour and charm one's thirsted for so long, and the inspiring people. I can even feel a sorry tenderness for poor old Brinnsville, when I think of the joys it lacks, and that I'm about to revel in.

Yours, all anticipation,

NANCY.

Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu,
August twenty-eighth,
(and quite late at night).

Glory, I am having a ravishing time, and I love the sea, and thank goodness my hair isn't quite straight. I think I couldn't be happy if I was feeling uglier than usual, as straight people must, on the ocean.

As it is, I've enjoyed every minute—since my first few homesick qualms. Romantic visions of adventure are all very fine, but when one found oneself actually on the boat at San Francisco—going off alone to the other side of the earth, where one's sole friend was a girl one hadn't seen for years—

it did seem rather mad, you know. My heart sank when I said good-bye to Hattie; and when Jean's little blue coat and flirty blue skirts disappeared down the gangplank—well!

Of course, after those first panicky moments I cheered up—comforted by the stack of flowers and packages and letters that filled my cabin, and by the lively strains of the Filipino band that is now the joy of our hearts for moonlight dancing on deck. Oh yes, we have all the proper South-Pacific "atmosphere"; glorious weather, full moon, phosphorescence, flying fish and all the rest of it; and a jolly crowd at our table, with whom I waltz and play baseball and deck tennis, or swim in the open-air pool, and frisk and feel a girl again. It *is* nice to be out of that sombre black, and in the world once more.

The people I like best are the Nelsons, a couple from San Francisco. She is a fascinating dark-eyed Lina Cavalieri type; and he a pink, beautifully scrubbed baldish ty-

rant, who's retired from all business except gloweringly guarding his lovely wife. But she calls him "The Lamb," and he's really a dear, and adores her.

Oh, and I must tell you—the Chesleighs are on our boat. Mr. Chesleigh is American Ambassador to Tokio, you know. He has been out before, but returned for a conference at Washington and to bring his wife and daughter, Diana. I thought it would be nice when I found they were on board, as he at least must know Eloise, and could tell me about her. But they turn out to be very grand—conscious Celebrities, who draw a perpetual purple cordon round themselves, and loftily ignore the rest of the boat, with an "I simply don't see you" expression.

Mrs. Chesleigh is an iron-grey "substantial" woman, with the air of having swallowed all the nine virtues; and "Diana" a big beautifully groomed blonde girl, with big pearls and a big voice, and a big breezy way of inhabiting the earth, wherever she is. But

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she has the gait of a goddess. I do like to see a big woman carry herself well.

The Ambassador is an imposing white-haired personage, who would look very nice in a state coach and processions, I should think. But isn't it surprising to find all this exclusiveness in the representatives of supposedly democratic America?

The only people the Chesleights will notice are a young banking man from Manila, who beau's Diana, and the Gorrings—oh very much from Boston, Glow! An aristocratically inactive couple, who sit all day in their chairs, with veils and hard biscuits and books on the East. Mrs. Gorrington has thin, protesting sort of features, bronze hair, and an eye that leaves no doubt as to the entire inferiority of the rest of this world. While he—"Mr. Willoughby Gorrington with manservant"—is a dreadful creature; flat-footed, flat-headed, with a marvellous tailor and no chin to speak of. He has a grieved way of looking over the top of his book as though

he smelled something particularly unpleasant.

Besides all this Distinction, we have a baseball team, a returning consul or two, any number of missionaries and buyers; to say nothing of remittance men, music hall "stars," sharpers, Jap students, Chinese dignitaries and their bevy of exotic toddling women—and several reprobate American sons, shipped off to reform! It's the scrap-heap of the East, even before one lands there; and much more interesting than the conventional Atlantic.

Of course the Chesleigh-Gorrings do their best to preserve a chaste propriety among this informal mixture of types. They never join in our deck sports or dances; but dress and dine and play bridge in one or another of their *cabines de luxe*, and carry the drawing-room atmosphere everywhere. It is rumoured on the ship that the Chesleighs are very rich, especially Diana, who inherited from her grandmother; but that the Gorrings "come of better people."

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Doesn't that sound like Brinnsville? I thought of the Mercers and Twickenhams immediately! But I do have to smile to myself now and then, when they all sail past; thinking of the revelation to come, when they shall discover me as the close friend of the wife of their own Secretary! I feel rather sorry for Diana. She looks wistful sometimes when she's watching the rest of us dance—or running off to the stern to gamble.

You aren't shocked, Glory? It's only fantan, with B.V.D. buttons that a smiling old Chink counts out by fours, and you bet on the final number remaining. Of course we always lose; then we try dice or dominoes. I do love to go "out back"; the Chief Officer takes us, the Nelsons and me, and Mrs. Digby—an attractive woman from Yokohama, with the most entrancing baby. When the babe's asleep, we go and peep at the Chinese.

It's a queer mixture: fantan, the hymns of the missionaries, the clink of glasses and

poker chips from the smoking-room, Japanese wrestlers, Chinese jugglers, the mingled strains of a Philippine guitar and an American Victrola, the pervading spicy smell of "chow." A more varied and stimulating life to observe in ten minutes than one could see in ten years of middle-Western America.

And now, after a week of this diverting existence at sea, we awoke this morning to behold the purple volcanoes of Hawaii close by; and everybody got into hats and gloves and shore clothes, and looking very elegant and uncomfortable, came on land to explore.

The Nelsons asked me to be with them (we have twenty-four hours here), and we decided to do some motoring, and then spend the night out at this famous beach hotel at Waikiki. Well, and it is nice to have a room again, and a real bed; but as for Honolulu itself, I'm rather disappointed.

Like so many places, it's been over-described—as unfair as "puffing" a friend to some one about to meet her. You know one always thinks of Hawaii as the very essence

of romance and exotic novelty; and then one gets off the boat into what appears to be a mere medium-sized American town, with dry goods shops and drug stores and trolley cars; movie ads. and soda water fountains, just like home. And the Hawaiian beauties of song and story turn out to be square brown women in white wrappers and sailor hats. They aren't very piquant, coming out of a prosaic American grocery or ten cent store, instead of singing in hammocks and gay wreaths as we see them in vaudeville.

I began to feel rather flat, as we drove through the town. In the residence part it was better: waving palms and bright flowers, white houses gleaming enticingly beyond majestic avenues of cocoanut trees—though that too-brilliant tropical vegetation seems theatric and a little chromo-ish, and I do think bungalows are a depressing form of architecture. I love it up high—as high as one can get, like the Bavarian castle of Neueschwanstein, that's hewn out of a mountain peak.

It was high enough at the Pali—the historic precipice where thousands of Hawaiian patriots jumped to death rather than surrender—and a literally breath-taking view. Not only the gorgeous panorama, but the wind, nearly swept us off our feet. And my hat was too big, and my hair (washed yesterday!) blew all over, and I lost my best shell pin. Then our motor broke down, and we were afraid we'd be too late for the surfing, and altogether, Glory, it was "one of those days"; so perhaps I'm not quite fair myself to Honolulu.

We did get to Waikiki in time to bathe, however. And it was worth everything, that thrilling hour in the waves. You skim the surf like a bird, on those slim bits of planks; and half the fun is being shot off into the water. "The Lamb," looking unusually pink in a bright green bathing suit, was terrified; and exhorted his "Amy" every minute. But we all got out safe and sound, and ravenously hungry; and ate a tremendous dinner.

The food was delicious: alligator pears, and papiya, and of course pineapple—the best I ever ate. But one was rather disappointed in the music. This hotel must have the best there is, yet somehow it hadn't the life or "go" that we're accustomed to in the Hawaiian bands that come to America. It was slower and more indolent, and with an insinuating undercurrent—whining, feline, that repelled; though the contradictory sweetness and delicacy and sadness appealed to one indescribably.

It's as though their music is the lost soul of Hawaii, seeking still to express its original (and only part-obsured) fineness.

Lots of people from the ship were at dinner. The Chesleighs and Gorrings had a table exquisitely apart, and special service, as usual. "Wilbuh's" feet looked flatter than ever, in brand-new shiny pumps; and he ate with a pained elegance that made any one with an appetite appear a monster of vulgarity.

Afterwards they all went off in motors,

with some of the dignitaries who came to meet the Ambassador; and the rest of the ship people scattered, to the various beach resorts. But the Nelsons and I decided to turn in early, and enjoy our big comfy beds after a week of bunks. So here I am, alone on my balcony, and very little light through the window, to write by; so excuse the scrawly parts, Glory.

It's a black velvet night, with the moon behind a cloud, and the dense sweetish smell of Hawaii—a mixture of pineapple, damp wood and seaweed—wafted in on every breeze. I would like to sit here and think—life is unfolding so fast, and so interestingly. It seems years since I left the ranch; centuries since Brinnsville.

You and Bumble must exchange my news—keep an eye on that old B., won't you, Glow? He's so splendid, and so absolutely wasted in our provincial village; though somehow, with that quixotic idealism of his, he seems to keep aloof from the gossip and

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small snobberies, and to make people show him only their best.

He sent me a characteristic telegram to the steamer—said he was sure I should find in the East “all the beauty and wonder you are carrying there.” Oh, but much more!—shan’t I, Glory. Bumble thinks everybody is wonderful, because rose spec’s are his everyday wear; but *I* know I’m a red-headed little good-for-nothing, with only a vast ambition and a hodge-podge of undeveloped talents to show for my twenty-six years.

However, I do intend to make the most of the opportunities of this tour. If possible, it shall quite re-furnish and recreate me, into a super-Nancy you’ll be proud of! Anyhow, *on verra*.

Good night. There will be a sort of enraptured sleep, to the swish of the swaves; and then to-morrow, *leis*, and singing on the dock they say,—good-bye Honolulu, and on to Japan!

Sweet dreams, from

NANCY.

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Imperial Hotel, Tokio,
September 8, 19—.

Dear Bumble:

Just back from my first glimpse of Eloise and the Embassy, and feeling tremendously exalted! Quite different from yesterday when—but I'd better begin at the beginning and tell you everything.

We came into Yokohama harbour Sunday afternoon—seventeen years since the parents first landed me there, a round-eyed child of nine. It's a lovely, peaceful little harbour, trim and green and low—after the "sky-line" of San Francisco; but Mt. Fuji, that we'd hoped to see, was hid perversely behind some unnecessary clouds, and a dismal greyish mist was falling.

Then there were the partings with one's steamer acquaintances, who all at once seemed old friends. Mr. Digby—such a nice man—was out to meet his wife and little Betty; and there were several launches of welcoming residents, among them some of our Embassy for the Chesleights.

I was tremendously excited, and looked everywhere for Eloise; but she wasn't there. However, Mr. Digby pointed out her husband—a tall, thinnish man with a red moustache, behaving with great deference to an old lady that at the last minute the Gorrings unearthed—from a crypt in the hold or somewhere. Nobody ever saw her until time to leave the ship; but then she was much in evidence—heaps of lace scarves and fur tippets and reticules, and very made up and imposing.

Rodney Lynd was steering her along to the gangway, while a slim fair man followed with Diana. Mr. Digby said his name is Vane, and that he's Third Secretary of our Embassy, and a nephew of Mrs. Chesleigh's.

He's been in diplomacy some time, and just happened to be stationed in Tokio when Mr. Chesleigh was appointed here. He doesn't look a bit stuffy, or like them; but has lots of expression, and cool, amused blue eyes—and such a waist!

Just as they passed us, Diana told him—

and a good many other people—that “there was absolutely *no one* on the boat, except the Gorrings and Madame Saint Didier.” Rather an *enfant terrible* beginning, for the new Ambassador’s daughter!

Mr. Vane shut his eyes up at her, and laughed. I fancy he understands Diana.

I went ashore with the Nelsons, eager to see everything. But the water-front, where you land, is a little dashing: drab and desolate, and great blank “go-downs”—foreign warehouses—closed on account of Sunday. It looked not very Japanese, but as though commerce had laid a heavy hand on the natural beauty of Yokohama.

Rickshas, that I used to adore to ride in, now seem undersized; one feels as though oneself had grown wheels, and not quite used to them. The streets on the way to the hotel were disappointing too; instead of the traditional Japan of flowers and pagodas and gaily robed people, there were low brown houses, uninteresting types in sober-hued

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kimono, and a general depressing atmosphere of poverty.

But the Grand Hotel is rather nice, and I loved my room on the canal, where the sampans with their peaked prows swish up and down, and one could watch their quaint sails out to the Bay. And then at night, everything is gayer and more attractive—with the lanterns and lighted open Japanese shops, transparent *shoji*, and alluring balconies. We took rickshas, that first evening, and rode along Theatre Street—the festive centre of Yokohama—which is especially amusing; gorgeous coloured banners, painted poles, lurid cinema posters (impossible combinations of heroic deeds, such as a maiden being electrocuted, dashed into the sea, and saved from the villainous assassin, all in one three by five chromo!). And before these miraculous attractions, a shuffling chattering throng of animated little brown people in kimono, as keen as any theatre crowd on Broadway.

Yesterday—my first whole day in Japan

—I did a shopping tour with the Nelsons, and then we all three had tea up on the Bluff with the Digbys, before I left for Tokio. How the Bluff carries me back! It's the residence part of Yokahama, you know, high above the lower commercial town; our family had a house there for six months, and all the way up the steep hill I was thinking of how our rickshas used to fly down it, helter-skelter—with mother calling "*máte—máte!*" (her one Japanese word, which means "stop!"), while I delightedly shrieked to my coolie to "hurry!"

The Bluff is really beautiful—much more Japanese than down by the water-front. Slim green lanes, with bamboo fences, and butterfly children tripping up and down; and now and then a cluster of picturesque little shops, perched along the hill. I saw the very ones where I used to buy "*ame*" (a sort of jellied paste) and shaved ice, years ago; and our No. 321 garden, with the ricksha stand just opposite—nothing seemed changed.

The Digbys have such a pretty house (he is in the hardware business out here); and the baby was brought in by her worshipping *amah*, and she knew me at once, and crowed. It was a delightful tea; and I was not a bit keen on leaving that homely atmosphere, and my nice Nelsons, and going off to Tokio alone.

But I tried to feel very brave and self-reliant when I said good-bye. Then I rode alone down to a large and quite European red-brick station, and took a fussy little Japanese train—with cars much like ours, only the seats go lengthwise, and both men and women take off their shoes and sit on their feet, upon these upholstered benches, and smoke perpetual cigarettes and make horrid throat-clearing noises. Forty minutes of this (there are no separate smoking-cars) and twenty miles of colourless flat country, —and I arrived in Tokio!

It's a vast, murky city, sprawled indiscriminately over an immense amount of land; an incongruous *pêle-mêle* of smoky modern

factories, traditional thatched huts, trams, rickshas, lanterns, electric signs, and a bizarre assortment of Japanese and European stores lining the commonplace business streets. I wasn't *engayée*, as the French say—nor yet by the sight of this dreary Imperial; no lounge to speak of, but a sort of undertaker's "parlour," done in fringe and "rep" and oak hatracks—just like the old Dunlap House at home. And a morguish writing-room, with newspapers five weeks old, and nowhere a soul to be seen.

Surroundings affect me profoundly. On the boat I was so happy and excited about everything; but now I began to wonder why did I come? Suppose Eloise should be changed, and not glad to see me? Or suppose I'd get sick way off here? The heat was suffocating, and we had an earthquake while I was eating dinner—a nasty rocking, and all the dishes fell to the floor—and I went to bed blue as an owl.

But then this morning Eloise telephoned, in answer to my announcement note—very

much excited, and obviously pleased, and asked me to come to tea with her this afternoon. So I perked up, and began to feel better. The party was for the Chesleighs, and I wore my prettiest white mousseline, and a new black tulle hat, and enjoyed myself tremendously.

Rather nervous beforehand, riding up the Embassy hill, wondering what it would be like—and of course I hadn't seen Eloise for eight years. But far from being different or strange, met way out here she seemed like one's own family; and her husband was exceedingly nice and cordial. They have an attractive white bungalow, at one corner of the large Embassy Compound (about two acres in that, altogether, I should think—several houses and a big garden, besides the Embassy proper—and everything very nice and green and well-kept).

Eloise is whiter, and a little thinner than she used to be; but with the same wonderful black hair and forget-me-not eyes, that always look a little wistful. She held me off

at arm's length, and said, "Why, Nancy, you've bloomed!" Which I think was a sweet welcome, don't you Bumble?

Then she took me through the green and gold drawing-room to a sort of *lanai*, like the Honolulu verandas—glassed in, and opening onto the garden: a delightful place to entertain on a hot day. There were heaps of people, all very animated in spite of the heat; and one got a general impression of fragrant tea, pale smiling women and distinguished men. You can tell the residents from the transient visitors instantly; the former have that Eastern burnt-up look—some brown, others shockingly white, but all rather scorched and tight in their skins.

Almost the first person I saw was Diana Chesleigh, sitting on the garden steps, with a tall tanned man who looked English. Diana was radiantly beautiful, and her pearls seemed bigger and lovelier than ever. Then I caught sight of Mrs. Gorrington, marvelously Luciled, and her weary "Wilbuh"; Mr. Lynd as usual towing their old lady.

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And in a corner, with Eloise, were the Ambassador and Mrs. Chesleigh, receiving as informally as ever *they* could.

Eloise presented me affectionately as her school-girl friend, "who did everything better than anybody, and carried off all the prizes"! And she said I was a miraculous apparition in Japan, and what courage I'd had to start out alone, directly I got her letter.

And then, finally, "But you all (meaning the Chesleighs and Gorrings) must have come on the same boat."

Their well-masked amazement was delicious. Mrs. Chesleigh, superbly condescending, said, "Er——yes. We noticed your exuberant activities, in ah——baseball, and so forth."

And the Ambassador gallantly added that naturally they had all noticed *la belle dame châtain*e.

Then I met a lot of other people: Mr. Vane, and Commander Harris (our naval attaché), and Mr. Verrek—the Englishman

who was talking to Diana, and his sister, Lady Gertrude Asche. There were a dimpled round little Frenchwoman, and a lovely slender Russian with green eyes—whose names I forget—and many others. Besides the dozens of young men, most of them Secretaries, I suppose.

They were all very cordial and interested. The women do give one the "inventory eye" rather; but I'm sure I should take things in too, if I lived out here, away from the shops and pretty new fashions. And I've promised to show them all my clothes.

They were quite frank about hinting, and the little Française explained, "Oh, we pounce on new people. This boat, with all you smart American women, is a god-send."

On the other hand, they were hospitality itself in their eagerness to help me enjoy Tokio; suggesting all sorts of interesting parties. And the lovely Russian said earnestly, "But you will never stay at that horrible hotel. You must take a house."

Wouldn't it be jolly, Bumble? Really to

live for a while in the midst of these charming cosmopolitan people? The women have such pretty caressing ways, and are so easy and assured—and the men even more attractive, I think.

I had an amusing talk with Mr. Vane, the Chesleighs' nephew. He said, "You were on the boat with my people, weren't you? Of course they didn't meet you. Aunt Augusta has a genius for overlooking attractive individuals."

I liked his use of that word, and his absolute frankness and *sans-gêne*. He said he had noticed me on the boat yesterday, and hoped I would come to Tokio; and what luck it was to find me a friend of Eloise's. He lives just across the garden, in the Japanese Secretary's cottage.

And he calls the Ambassador "Toodles"!

The Englishman, Mr. Verrek (Second British Secretary) is good-looking, but rather thuddy in conversation. And his sister (a widow of about forty) has the most amazing lot of teeth. I liked Baron de Roche,

one of the French Secretaries, and some of the others better. But Eloise was quite *empresée*, in presenting the English people.

We went out into the garden after tea—a lovely big one, with those jutting Japanese pine-trees, and a funny little pond; and it was remarkable how at home and old friends one felt with these people one had only just met. They told me all about the Coronation and the season here—the Emperor's Ball and Garden Party, and all the official dinners and gaieties—among them Japanese grand opera, if you please!

I think it must be an enchanting life, and said so. But the Russian lady drawled, "Oh it's all very well for the flitting visitor; but you'd find it very different if you had to stay here. Any woman will tell you: the first year you lose your hair, the second your teeth, and the third your husband."

I said I was sure she hadn't lost any of them; which turned out to be a terrific remark, as Mr. Vane whispered to me—with such a look!—that her husband had died very

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suddenly, and it was rumoured that she poisoned him. Probably he was a horrid old thing, and she is so lovely.

They all had lots of little jokes and allusions among themselves, but never in a rude or exclusive way. On the contrary, they seemed to want one to share everything, even to the intimate gossip. I find gossip is much nicer, tied up with French wit and amusing personalities, Bumble! I even indulged in a little myself—only about the Gorrings and “Wilbuh.”

When I went home every one renewed invitations and cordial reminders; the little French person called “Don’t forget you’ve promised to show me your chiffons,” and Mr. Harris said he was coming to take me house-hunting to-morrow. I felt already as though I had lived here for years.

And now I’m back at the hotel—only how different it seems from yesterday, when I wanted to die of loneliness; and in the morning Eloise is coming to see me, and make plans. Hasn’t it really been wonderful: first

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getting her letter to suggest the very thing I needed, and then having her to link me to this fascinating life out here? But it's true, I shouldn't like hotels for long. Wouldn't it be nice to have a little house, and a little maid or two, and give parties to these delightful people; who have just the qualities—originality, and distinction, and sophisticated charm—that I've longed to meet?

Think of me drinking it all in, when you read this; and so happy to be in the real world, at last.

Your devoted

NANCY.

American Embassy, Tokio,
September 9, 19—.

Do you see where I am, Bumble? I couldn't wait to tell you, though I wrote only yesterday. Just as I was having dinner last night, Eloise appeared—after all the fatigue of her party, rushing off down here—to say they wanted me to stay with them

while I'm in Tokio. Did you ever hear of anything so kind?

I felt it would be an imposition to come to them at this Coronation time, when Eloise must be so occupied; and suggested that perhaps it would be easier if I'd take a house. But she said it would never in the world do for me to have a house alone in Tokio—that it would make a fearful scandal. Besides, she added, it would be a great happiness to herself and Rodney to have me with them; and I was to pack at once and come back with her then and there.

So I did. And it is lovely to be in a home again, after those impersonal boats and hotels (I admit I've even hankered after my despised place in Brinnsville); and E.'s funny old Rodney gave me a true welcome.

They have a beautiful house, that really belongs to the First Secretary, Mr. Wilmer. But his wife—the clever novelist, Alla Wilmer, you know—has been ill; and they sailed for America to-day on leave. So Eloise has their house while hers is being re-

built after a recent fire—isn't she lucky to get it?

As a rule, only the Ambassador and the First and Japanese Secretaries live in the Embassy Compound. But this year the Japanese Secretary, Mr. Grelle, has Mr. Vane to live with him—both being bachelors; and now Rodney and Eloise have come to "No. 2."

There are only the two houses, besides the big rambling white Embassy and Chancery, within the high Compound walls. And then the servants quarters—fifty-three, counting their families, Eloise says!

Hers are dears. Toshi, the little maid, unpacked me and put me to bed last night—we were all dead tired; and the first thing I saw this morning, was her fantastically pretty figure, with a black-eyed baby on her back.

She brought my breakfast on a little teak table by the bed, and introduced the baby—whose name is "A Dream," and who has the most adorable tonsured black head.

Then Eloise came in, looking like a baby herself, in a sea-blue kimono, with her hair in two braids like school-days; to curl up on the end of the bed and talk things over.

Of course we had simply *oodles* to say, after all this time. She was keen to hear about my life, particularly about James; and rather pumped me (not very successfully, poor dear) about how he'd left things arranged for me. Eloise was always a practical girl, and a devotedly impulsive friend.

She declared that every one at the party was crazy about me; and that it was a perfect tragedy to have buried a girl with my beauty (!) and originality, and art for clothes, in a provincial tomb like Brinnsville. Diana Chesleigh, with all her jewels and Paquin, was "uninteresting and clumsy" beside me!

You know, I didn't quite like her running down Brinnsville—after all it is my home. But the other part was very nice, and I let her talk quite a while about that. She said Lady Neff, the British Ambassador's wife,

had telephoned her about something, and reported that all their Embassy came home yesterday, enthusiastic about "*la belle châ-taine*." The Ambassador's *bon mot* travelled quickly!

As a matter of fact, Bumble, I'm not beautiful, and I know it; so don't fear my head will be turned by a little fuss. I have a mirror and I've studied it; and I know to the last eye-lash my good points. They are brown eyes, red hair (*chestnut*, for euphemy!), a fair complexion, and a cleft chin. My nose turns up, my mouth's too big, and my figure's not bad, but my neck could be fatter.

But I know how to dress my deficiencies, and if out here they think I'm 'andsome, why so much the more fun. Wickedly, I rather led Eloise on, when she said—so seriously!—that I could make a brilliant match, with any one of half a dozen young diplomats, all of them destined to a great career.

And then added, that "of course the poor

fellows, getting married on their tiny salaries, must have a little money."

I nodded solemnly, and said then "I supposed they'd get it—poor fellows!"

I hope she doesn't think from this that I'm a plutocrat or bondholder or anything. But it would be funny to watch her manoeuvres, if she really should undertake to "get me off"! And immediately she began talking about Mr. Verrek—who it appears is an Honourable, and the heir of Lord Gresham, and a very important person indeed.

I said he was good-looking, but that he puffed when he talked, and I thought there was something a little queer about his knees. (They really are all right. I only said it to plague her.)

Eloise looked reproachful, and said what did knees matter, when you had one of the oldest titles in England? But that of course Mr. Verrek wasn't the only nice man in Tokio. There was the Marquis de Thierry, and young Vorslav, and Baron de Roche

("who was obviously taken with you, Nancy!").

I mentioned Mr. Vane, whom I like best of any one I've met. And Eloise said, "Vane is a darling, but he won't work. He stays at home all morning, and never goes near the Chancery, unless Rodney telephones for him to decode a message or something. He isn't 'strenuous' or 'efficient' enough for the Americans; but Europeans adore his non-chalance and wit. At Madrid, he was the greatest favourite with the King of Spain, and was always being invited to stay at one or another of the country palaces."

I said I'd thought him delightful, and so funny and frank about his relatives. And I told Eloise a little about the Chesleighs and Gorrings on the boat.

She said it was too bad they were sniffy, but that that was the way of the world; particularly towards young and unattached women. And that I should take it as a compliment if they continued to try to snub me; because it will simply mean that I am

getting more attention than Mrs. Gorrington, or Diana.

"Girls are always afraid of experienced charm, especially in a widow," Eloise wagged her head wisely. "Still, Diana Chesleigh is wonderfully handsome. She almost caught Lord Alton in Petrograd last year—of course she wants to make a splendid marriage, and to get a title for all her money. As for poor Sue Gorrington, she is always worried to death to make ends meet; but she was a Standish of Beacon Hill, and knows every one in creation."

I thought of the Lucile frocks, but then E. added that now it was easier, because they're travelling with this rich old Madame Saint Didier (a one-time American beauty, who married a French millionaire, in truffles) and that she invited the Gorringtons to come to the Coronation as her guests. They have all the friends, and get the invitations; she pays the bills. "So it's nice for both sides," Eloise says.

Later this morning, when we went out, she

talked quite frankly about diplomacy. Lots of its methods she deplores—particularly the cajoling and being nice to people who mean nothing to you; and always having to follow your superior's lead, in your choice of friends. For instance, if Mrs. Chesleigh were to frown on a certain woman, it wouldn't be "diplomatic" for Eloise to invite her; though the woman might be her favourite of all Tokio.

Mustn't it be horrid, not to be able to be oneself half the time? But Eloise says she'd do more than that for Rodney. She has the deepest love and devotion for this odd but distinctly nice husband of hers; and she's stubbornly determined he shall get to the very top of the diplomatic tree.

It is hard for them, because of course there's no permanent diplomatic service in America. Things are always on the edge, pending a change of Administration; but Eloise and Rodney have done their best, and he has stayed in, even with another party.

I do admire her loyalty, Bumble, though

for myself I should hate such studied managing. Eloise says it will be very different for me while I'm here; that I needn't bother with any but the really important people. I said I had rather bother only with the nice ones; but she replied that one had to think farther than that. And that "Vane" (she calls all the men by their last names as they do on the Continent) and such people were delightful to talk to, "but they won't get you anywhere," says practical Eloise.

I am to concentrate on Comtesse de Regny—the *doyenne* of the Corps; and Lady Neff and Madame Kollavsky: "the women who count." And if I *could* take a little trouble with Mrs. Chesleigh, why it would help. Fancy being nice to that pyramid of Respectability! However I shall do it, for Eloise. To-morrow she is taking me to leave cards on everybody.

I've written you reams about our talks, and very little about Tokio. But I'm liking it much better than at first. How different a place looks, when people begin to bow to

you in it! The Ginza (Tokio's principal business street) which I'd thought a dreary thoroughfare, to-day seemed positively fascinating—when Eloise and I went to do some errands, and met a lot of her friends.

E. was hunting brocades for Mrs. Chesleigh's Coronation train. She took a tremendous amount of trouble, and it's only the beginning; as she's finding a pattern now, and then it has to be copied, and embroidered on new stuff, and everything. Eloise owns two lovely trains, one lined with silver, that she got for her presentation at St. James; and she says she'll lend that to Mrs. Chesleigh, if she can't find what she wants. It would never do, says Eloise, for her to outshine her Ambassadors.

Well, there is certainly an overpowering lot of etiquette, and plenty of detractions from the life of a diplomat's wife. I was thinking of it as we drove home, past the Parliament buildings and Imperial Moat. The Moat is the best of Tokio, or of any capital almost. No palace I have ever seen

has so unique a setting: seven miles of translucent water, and beautiful old grey walls; and then that velvet-green embankment all round, with its fantastic, low-sweeping trees.

I thought how one would thrill to possess it; but then—at the remembrance of the castle, shut-away inside—that I should prefer to have nothing, rather than be the prisoner of power. Which is all they are, kings and emperors, and a great many mere people: in jail to their own supremacy, of one kind or another. Everybody knows that kings lead a perfectly deadly life; and so do most millionaires. Even poor Eloise is in thrall to her ambition for Rodney, and he to the spark of “sovereignty” he impersonates.

And how can it be worth the sacrifice? You give up everything to possess one thing—that is, power; and after you’ve got it, you aren’t even powerful enough to do as you please!

I must rest now, as to-night we’re going to the opera. And this afternoon any number of people have been here; ostensibly to

call on me, but really to see my clothes. The women I mean. Madame Tarascon, the plump little French blonde, immediately made an excuse to come in my room and powder her nose; and Señora Posada, the Spanish Minister's wife, and Countess Kollavsky soon followed.

Then they begged, "Do show us your pretties!" And flitted round the room like curious children, looking at my photographs, and smelling my scent bottles; and I think they opened every jar and cold-cream tube on the dressing-table.

Somehow I didn't feel as ready to show them my things—all these strangers—as I was yesterday. So I steered them back to the drawing-room, after they had seen a hat or two. And perhaps they didn't like it; for they were just a little *cat*, before the men.

Señora Posada remarked on all my frocks being black or white, and said, "You're a really truly widow, then? How nice. Because of course you in America are so blissfully free to get rid of a bad bargain, one

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never knows whether these lost husbands are alive or not."

And Madame Kollavsky (the Russian I'd thought so fascinating) laughingly wanted to know more about "those mysterious bottles you didn't explain. As the rest of us, too, yearn for gold-dusted hair, and a rose cream complexion."

In a way they were even more caressing than yesterday (and certainly more intimate!). But—have the pretty pussies claws?

Dubiously,
NANCY.

Kaihin-in Hotel,
Kamakura,
September 13, 19—.

DEAR BUMBLE:

We are spending a delightful week-end at this lovely spot by the sea. Motored down (thirty-five miles from Tokio) yesterday—Eloise and Rodney, the Chesleighs, the two "V's," and myself. The V's are

Vane and Verrek, who are constantly together, and always referred to like that.

I wish you could have seen the Fords de luxe we drove down in! No one out here uses any other car; and you would never guess the hidden skeleton of all that plate glass and Bedford cord, tassels and flower-holders, speaking tubes and every other known apparatus of a self-respecting limousine. The clever man who rents them to the diplomats must put in some special springs, too, for we were quite comfortable and made excellent time.

Much of the way was through the paddy-fields, and my first glimpse of rural Japan. Rather picturesque, with the brown-legged, blue and white kerchiefed peasant women wading up to their knees in the rice; and the red pagodas and little tea-houses on the hill-side. Then we finally saw Fuji, snowy and serene—like a ghost mountain in her veil of white cloud; and beyond, the sea, and a grove of those emerald jutting pines. It

was real Japan at last, and so grateful after the stereotyped cities.

You remember how disappointed I was with Yokohama? I've since learned that the Japanese themselves hold it in great disdain, as foreign and uncharacteristic. They have even made it a derisive adjective, and things tending towards the European are dubbed "very *Yokohama*."

But they love all their mountain and sea resorts, and certainly Kamakura is true Japanese: with its zig-zag trees, and thatched dolls-houses, bamboo-hedged lanes and gay-kimonoed children playing before the open booths. It is interesting to watch the Japanese dwarfed scheme of things give way to the grand scale, as you approach their temples; and their fashion of putting both temples and tea-houses at the top of many luring steps, does lend charm. I think the Kamakura Buddha, in his heavenly grey-green peace of old bronze and spreading pines, is the most satisfying shrine I ever visited.

But *why* with the Chesleights? The Ambassador and Mrs. C. climbed down resignedly out of their motor, and each "said a few words," as though they were opening a bazaar—then subsided thankfully against their cushions. While Diana, all the time we were at the Buddha, was taken up with a Yokohama newspaper containing a fulsome description of herself by some one called "Julietta." (The society column compassing the globe!)

She showed it to Mr. Verrek, with a laugh; and he proceeded to read a paragraph about me. Perhaps it's just as well I've never met Julietta, or she might not describe so agreeably just what I'd like to look like. She made me a sort of combination of Cleopatra, the Empress Josephine, and Madame Poiret. And Mrs. Chesleigh emphasised my blessings by adding, "How very fortunate you were to have friends to visit at the Embassy"!

I didn't dare look at Vane, who had sent me more than one wicked grin on the

way down; when his aunt—oblivious of the country she had never seen—was telling Eloise about the Gorrings' connections. She dwelt particularly on the fact that they "knew every one," and were and always had been, themselves, the very *Best People*.

She, of course, was one of the Vermont Vanes; and she was free to confess that she judged a great deal by family. (I could feel her planting question marks all across my back.) Society had changed so sadly, since those always vastly superior "old days"; young people like Graham and Diana didn't appreciate what it meant to be born of *Mayflower* ancestry. Oh, but I did, Bumble!—having heard all about it from the Mercers and Twickenhams.

Vane rolled his eyes at all this toploftiness; and took me off alone to see the temple of Kwannon. It is a huge trunk of cedar, carved into the goddess of pity—and humility. She was not, said Vane, the goddess of the Vermont Vanes!

He is such fun; and being near neigh-

bours we see a lot of one another, and are growing to be great friends. I can't imagine falling in love with him—though Eloise says heaps of women are; but he's the most charming companions, so spontaneous and natural, and with the subtlest sense of humour. One glance of his eye can convey a whole comic vocabulary.

We found quite a crowd of the younger diplomats also down at this hotel over the week-end, and were a gay dinner-party at our table; the Comte de Thierry (Belgian Minister) and Baron de Roche and the Kollavskys and Gideon Brent—a rich old widower from Yokohama, who has made a fortune in bulbs.

Vane and I chaffed a good deal, and talked with Madame Kollavsky and Baron de Roche in French; and Mr. Verrek kept gazing wistfully towards our end, but Diana held him in check. I believe that already she has fixed the future Lord Gresham with an eye of determination.

Anyhow, she hastened to appropriate him

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after dinner, when he was edging off towards Vane and me. And I was only too glad to let her have him, and go off with Vane for a stroll on the beach. It was a heavenly night, with a tropical orange moon hung low, and the little waves crooning in musically at our feet. Such a romantic setting, and all we talked about was the cheese at dinner, and "Toodles," and Aunt Augusta!

Vane is tremendously amused by his people, and their "pontifical" attitude towards the Embassy—especially Diana, who never loses a chance to make herself known as the daughter of the Ambassador, even to telling the Japanese guide at the temple!

Among other things, he said Mr. Chesleigh admires me—which naturally annoys the women of his family. "And they're annoyed with you anyhow," Vane added candidly, "because it's obvious you are going to have a success. And you speak such good French—theirs being strictly *à la carte*; and you have ideas and originality, which are

qualities gravely distrusted by the "Best People"!

He is like a garrulous child, chattering along, sparkling, inconsequent: of course, rather indiscreet to tell me all this; but a person as quick as he, must sense that I'd never repeat it to any one out here. He regaled me with the most amusing tales about the different diplomatic characters: Madame Tarascon, who is as good as gold, and never had a flirtation, but who wants to appear piquantly wicked, and is always telling you at dinner how unspeakable she really is. And Monsieur Tarascon, who has a *béguin* for geishas and collects ten *sen* curios—he won't go higher—and Maria Posada, who's so bored with her father's parties, she goes up and takes a nap in the middle. They *have* assurance, as I told you.

I teased Vane a little about Madame Kolavsky—Eloise told me they had quite a *tendresse*; and he said she was good style and he admired her tremendously. She is the beautiful Russian I spoke of in my first letter—

with green eyes, and long ear-rings, and rather a tragedy manner.

Vane calls her the dramatic type—says she and her husband exchanged black rings engraved with all sorts of dire Russian hieroglyphics, when they were married; and that she made *him* say “obey”! Then later, it’s supposed, she poisoned the poor man.

“But what will you?” says Vane. “One ought to be grateful for anything that disposed of the superfluous creature, and left her free to come out here to look after her brother-in-law.”

I could have listened to him for hours; but Eloise called, and we had to go in. I hated leaving the moon and the water, and peaked-roofed houses, transfigured in that silvery light. From one of the little nearby huts came the twang of a *samisen*—a sort of Japanese banjo; then the “Hai!” of a ricksha coolie, and far off the thin quaver of a blind man’s warning flute. The sky was a most lovely deep, dark blue; and I know now what it means: the glamour of the East.

Inside, the hotel looked banal, and the people sleepy, or too gay. A flushed and laughing crowd in the drawing-room—some of the very young secretaries and two or three frizzy-headed women—were dancing exuberantly, ordering many drinks and making a great deal of noise. For there's the sordid side of the East too, always popping up to oust one's romantic dreams.

But oh, I do love it, and am gladder every minute that I came. We bathed this morning—quite a lot of us, and the water was heavenly. Mrs. Chesleigh looked down the side of her nose at my bathing-dress (which is black and white, from Paris, and built for diving, not for taking tea).

Diana was bigger than ever in her red one; but she swims splendidly, though she can't dive a bit. Vane and I left her to loll along with the Honourable Noel, while we did fancy somersaults, and a keen hand-over-hand race.

Then this afternoon we played tennis. And what do you think, Bumble? After the

first set, Eloise called me aside, and asked would I mind playing not quite so well; as poor Diana must feel it a little—about the French, and diving, and my “getting so much attention from the men.” It was only Vane and old Mr. Brent and Baron de Roche!

Eloise said: “You’re a perfect wonder, darling, but we do want Diana to be happy, don’t we, and not hurt!”

I was quite touched, and lost the game, of course. Eloise is certainly a marvel of kindness and tact. This must be why I overheard her telling Diana the other day that while I was very attractive, naturally I couldn’t compete with an international beauty like her; going on to hint that I had neither her features, nor frocks, nor fortune.

I was rather bewildered at the time, because E. tells me a dozen times a day how much prettier I am than Diana! But it was just her way of trying to keep people pleased and having a good time. She is so good to every one—always on the run for somebody, planning Coronation trains, hunt-

ing curios—she spent a whole morning over a vase for that impossible Madame Saint Didier; and working hard all day long to do her part. It's she who is the real diplomatist; and Rodney, that queer old raccoon, worships her.

They are giving a dinner for me at home to-morrow night, and the next day comes the Prime Minister's garden party (E. says he has the most beautiful garden in Japan—as big as a park). And there's a luncheon at Mrs. Jewett's, wife of our military attaché; and a geisha dinner by the V.'s, and some other things. A good deal going on, though it isn't yet the official season. We've already dined with the Comte de Thierry and the Tarascons; and oh, I must tell you about the opera.

Eloise and Rodney had a box-party—the piece was “Boccaccio,” given at the Imperial Theatre, entirely by Japanese. And really it was marvellous, when one knew that three years ago not one of the performers had ever sung or played a note, European

fashion. They did remarkably well—Miss Hara, the little prima donna, had a well-trained voice and quite a metropolitan air; and the comedian was distinctly amusing—which is extraordinary in a comedian anywhere. Of course the chorus was the weak spot—poor Signor Rossi who trains them, must have the patience of Job! And one could not get over the incongruity of the mystic Oriental frisking about in doublet and hose, flirting or self-bewailing—both, expressions absolutely *tabu* in the Japanese moral code.

It's a wonder they will allow the women to appear in *Boccaccio* in the disguise of men's clothing. Because, until quite recently no women were allowed on the Japanese stage at all—men took their parts; and to have advanced to the point of letting the guarded feminine emerge into conspicuousness—and *tights*! Eloise says at first it shocked them terribly; also that the whole business of opera struck them as ridiculous. But they will be progressive or die; so that the Japanese au-

dience, who used to shriek with laughter from beginning to end (particularly convulsed at the European's beloved high notes) now have arrived at attending in politely bored groups of four or five, and listening with lukewarm interest.

Madame Kariwara, Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress, to whom I was presented in the *foyer*, said with an indulgent smile: "We regard it as a curiosity."

She is a brilliant woman, Eloise says; speaks perfect English, and looked so distinguished and *grande dame* in her exquisite dark kimono. What would our great ladies of the Golden Horse Shoe say to such a costume for opera? But it is infinitely more artistic, if less expansive, than theirs; and the two little Princesses Madame K. was chap-eroning looked like flowers.

The Imperial Theatre is in excellent taste, just like any foreign opera house; and the whole thing, when one thinks of our ever similarly attempting to imitate the Oriental, seems miraculous.

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Now I must stop and dress. General Kamio, hero of the Tsingtao campaign, is dining with us, and has promised to tell his experiences. He is sharing the honours with young Count Orloff (son of the famous one) who is on his way from the Russian front to lecture in America, and who was at Eloise's box-party.

I do wish you were here, Bumble—and not just selfishly, for my own sake; but I wish you were in this sort of world—of big men and international affairs, where you would shine as in your proper setting. It's been splendid of you to stay there in the town your people made, and to help build it up; but one day you must find your rightful place and métier.

Devotedly,
NANCY.

American Embassy, Tokio,
September 17, 19—.

Oh, Bumble, how good to be in communication again! The American mail is in—

the first since I landed—and I gobbled my letters. Yours was so nice and full of news.

You *are* fine, to take what I said about us, so understandingly. You see, it wouldn't do—two people who want such a different kind of life—even if I had cared as you wished. I'm so relieved and happy to think you're forgetting the whole thing in your work which seems absorbing enough!—and that you're following my advice and seeing a lot of dear Glory.

She is the best I know, as well as the prettiest and most attractive generally. And you are my good old Bumble-B., whom I want to see "settled," and content. So if one day you should ask for my blessing . . . well, it would make me awfully happy—and to have life solved for darling Glow, who's worked enough of her youth away, and should have a good man to take care of her.

Perhaps the smelter strike came at the opportune moment for Glow—since you say her father's failing, and needs her constantly.

I suppose that, as usual, they'll have you to arbitrate the strike, Barry? What would Brinnsville do without you to settle all its squabbles—and rebuild its tenements and godfather its indigent babies, inveigle the Legislature about its summer's ice, and the various other things you casually mention you've been doing. And on top of which, you as casually add four pages of amazingly accurate comment on diplomacy and this East—that you've never seen!

It's all just as you say; but how you know it without having lived here, passes my feeble comprehension. There *are* the contrasts, the two poles—of great charm on the one hand, rather dismaying sordidness on the other; and, as you suggest, one finds these two opposites both in the country and in people—native and European, alike. I've met some thoroughly delightful and attractive Japanese, at parties; but then one goes into the streets and beholds on all sides the utterly uninteresting, almost vacuous faces of the great mass. I can't say Japan's *all* dainti-

ness and cherry-blossoms—in spite of the famous cleanliness, I've seen some people as dirty as the old-time beggars of Rome—many of the children with runny noses and dreadful eye or head diseases. And oh, my dear, the smells!

I know this isn't æsthetic, but I think the truth should be spoken, once in a way, to remind us—as you say—that “no country quite lives up to the highly touched-up chromo which is passed out for foreign consumption, but that one and all have their positive and negative qualities to be learned and appreciated.”

As for the social side of it, here in Tokio, I find the “pussies” most certainly do exist; together with their more stimulating men-folk. It's more the diplomatic “atmosphere,” than the people themselves, I believe, that provides one's satisfaction—the sense of being *en rapport* with the vital and significant happenings of the great powers all over the world.

I did have to laugh, though, just now re-

reading your letter. You'd been to the movies and baseball and a dinner party in Brinsville; I've been to the movies and baseball and dinner parties here in Tokio! Social activities round the world seem pretty much the same; though I still prefer to take mine with the "salt" of this official set.

Our baseball was rather amusing—the American University boys who were on our boat, against "Waseda" Japanese. It was a broiling day, but all the American residents loyally turned out; and great crowds of Japanese—only men of course—a quaint mob in kimonos and pot-hats, or the almost equally popular straw sailor. There was a regulation grandstand, though our Embassy party sat in an enclosure to ourselves.

Not exactly like the Giants, or the Chicago Cubs you know; but nevertheless quite exciting. The Japanese play well, but spoil it by being so cocky and such poor sports—they make the greatest fuss about getting hurt, and sulk like children when the other

side gains anything. We were delighted that America won (5—3); but the Japs were furious. I wish you could have seen the delicious Rah-rah boy with yellow gloves, monocle, and cane with "Waseda" banner, who led their yells with true Occidental *furor*!

It's rather shortsighted to make fun of them though—when their real game is trying to learn, and to incorporate in their national life what they see as the best and most helpful elements in our Western scheme of existence. We might better stop picking flaws, and take a leaf out of their book—of perception, and patience to acquire.

After the ball-game, half a dozen of us drifted off to Commander Harris's *gunabi* party—that is, Japanese dinner, at a typical native restaurant. It was rather jolly, our long line of rickshas gliding into the lantern-lighted court of the "House of the Happy Peacock;" where a bouquet of sweet little maids in kimono waited to welcome us and take off our shoes at the door. Then with

low bows and murmured apologies for their "unworthy inn," they escorted us to a thoroughly Japanese room upstairs: snowy mats, no furnishings, except some cushions and *kakemono* (a scroll painting, in classic Japanese design), and the characteristic flower decoration of autumn grasses.

We sat on our feet on the floor, of course; and the food was cooked on glowing charcoal *hibachis* before us, and served at little low tables, on the most exquisite porcelain. Some of the dishes were really good—fowl and mushrooms, mostly, and a delicious concoction of minced egg and duck; and when one rang the bell for anything, all the little serving girls called "*Hai!*" in a sort of chanting unison, and ran to answer. It was rather delightful.

At the movies, where we proceeded after the feast, European films were shown—to our disappointment. I was keen to see some of the gory Japanese pieces like those advertised in Yokohama, but instead, we had a most American "Woman's Way," and

"The Price of a Soul" (!); volubly explained by a sort of Japanese actor-interpreter, who stood out front and took each part, including the females', as they came on the screen. It was priceless!

Ice cream is sold during the intermission, and a kind of brown apple; carried round with a lightning coring and paring machine. The Japanese adore the movies, or anything theatric, for that matter. Toshi, Eloise's maid, lives at the cinema, and she always takes the baby. Eloise thinks her great ambition is that he shall become the Charlie Chaplin of Japan.

Besides these interesting variations of home amusements, I've been to the races at Yokohama (stupid, between you and me), and to several luncheons and tea-parties here, and then endless leaving cards with Eloise.

The calling system in diplomacy is even more intricate than in Brinnsville—which I always thought was about the worst. First, according to etiquette, Eloise had to request

the *doyenne* of the Diplomatic Corps, Countess de Regny, to allow her to bring me there; and a definite hour was set. After that she left my card with hers, "*Pour Présenter*," on the wives of the various Japanese Ministers; and the different Ambassadors, and women of our Embassy—there are about ten of those, including the wives of attachés, interpreters, etc.

We made eighty-five visits in three afternoons! Of course at lots of places we didn't even get out of the motor; but simply passed the cards through the window to solemn butlers in kimono, who drew in their breath and bowed to the ground. When we did get in, at the Japanese places it was rather stiff and dull—big, bare drawing-rooms, sparsely scattered with Occidental brocade "suits" of furniture, and the approved mincing pattern of Japanese feminine conversation—mostly exchanging compliments, "and how do you like our country?"

With the Europeans, there was usual ten minutes pitter-patter, trite and banal. It

makes not the slightest difference who is talking—a Marchioness, or Mrs. Twickenham; the weather and other women's affairs sound just the same, in Brinnsville or Tokio.

They do vary it a bit here, with talk about the Coronation; which everybody affects to find a dreadful bore. Much grumbling among the diplomatic women, about having to wear the prescribed evening dress at six A. M. on cold November mornings; and the attachés' wives are furious at having to stay at Nara (two hours from Kyoto, where the ceremonies will be held), and toil back and forth in their best clothes on the train.

But with all their fussing, none of them would miss it for a million. Mrs. Chesleigh always speaks of it as a "trying ordeal"; but I notice she lets poor Eloise run her feet off, over to Yokohama, for designs for her precious train. And now she is re-setting her tiara!

I believe the only one who really is bored, and would like to escape the whole thing, is

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the British Ambassadors, Lady Neff—who never says so. But she made a wry little face when Eloise brought up the subject, and murmured, “Oh well, it’s only for two weeks.”

Our visit to her was an oasis in the desert of stereotyped calls. Lady Neff belongs to the up-in-front-and-down-behind period, and her hats are Structures; but she is so interesting and dryly clever, one forgets about her odd clothes.

We had tea in a charming chintz drawing-room, and there were dogs—a setter and an Aberdeen—who ate almost as much as “T.R.” I felt at home, and so “easy,” after all the stiff places we’d been.

And Sir Francis Neff came in—one of those tall, weedy, Du Maurier Englishmen, with sweeping moustaches and Louis Quatorze manners. He met father years ago, in China, and paid him a beautiful tribute, I thought—when he said Dad was the finest diplomatist he had ever known, “Because he met the world with that sincerity and in-

instinctive kindness that is the essence of true diplomacy."

Wasn't it sweet of him? For of course Dad's work couldn't have seemed so vital to a man like Sir Francis—though I find that a great many people out here know about the International Institutes "for all creeds and races"; and that the original idea was my father's. The Institute in Tokio is most successful.

Eloise seemed very pleased that I got on so well at the British Embassy. We are invited to dinner there next Thursday, in honour of the Premier, Count Okara; and E. says it's a great compliment for me, an unofficial woman to be asked.

I thought I heard her congratulating Diana Chesleigh on being not invited, and telling her the dinner would be a bore. But Eloise explained that she didn't want the poor dear to be upset—girls don't go to the important dinners, but keep mostly within their own unmarried set, and have rather a dull time in Tokio.

"Fascinating widows have the best of things, the world round," says Eloise. You see, she is tactful with me as well as Diana.

She had a beautiful party for me—dinner of course—that's about all one can give, as there is no dancing on account of the war. It was fun, and illuminating, to see the inside arrangements of a diplomatic dinner party. Where people shall sit is an exhausting problem. Eloise and Rodney actually sent to the Foreign Office, to find out which of two Councillors of Embassy (who held the same rank) had first presented his papers, and been accredited to his Tokio post. Then, and only then, could they seat the two properly at table!

Eloise wore a sweet frock of peacock blue, and I my white chiffon with the sparkly trimming, you like. Mrs. Gorrington and Diana were very grand, in Callot and Poiret, respectively; and after dinner Mrs. Gorrington sang—her own compositions. And unfortunately Eloise remembered my school-girl warblings, and asked me to sing too.

I could have told her that wouldn't please the Gorrings, who don't want any one else in the Front Row. But since Eloise asked, of course, I did; and I've practised hard this year on the ranch, and my voice sounded quite nice and full.

I could see Mr. Gorrington fidgeting. Afterwards, he complimented me with fatigued irony on possessing "an organ of such volume" (!). And Madame Saint Didier, their old lady who pays the bills, said very loud: "But of course you are a professional."

Every one heard, as she intended they should, and I daresay that will go the rounds now. Gossip travels literally like lightning in the East. They hear all the Japan scandal in Manila, long before a boat has time to get there—while in Tokio, every morsel of information about anybody is feverishly circulated before nightfall. I've heard several little remarks passed round about myself, by people who I should think wouldn't bother. Every new woman out here gets at-

tention, and the other women at first are so cordial; but then it seems to get under their skins—that one should have the least bit more than they, for the moment—and they scratch, like any Lily Moore or Marie Taylor of Brinnsville.

Diana Chesleigh, for one, is of the opinion that I should be checked in my pursuit of her marked prize, the Honourable Mr. Verrek. I suppose because when occasionally he looks at me, I have had the audacity to look back; and once we even exchanged remarks about an earthquake. This is the extent of our shocking intimacy.

You see, I'm finding it a funny world, in some ways; but thoroughly interesting and worth while. Eloise has just been in to say I'm to be presented at Court next Thursday with Mrs. Chesleigh and Diana. Rodney arranged it—wasn't he an old duck? He mentioned father's name, it seems, and that was enough. They all remember Dad, though it's so long since he was out here; but he had an audience with this Mikado's father, and

always got on splendidly with the Japanese.

It *was* nice of Rodney, wasn't it? I'm quite excited. And it comes the same day as the British Embassy dinner—altogether quite thrilling. I'll write you the details later, of course. Yours, meanwhile,

NANCY.

American Embassy, Tokio,
September 22, 19—.

It is three o'clock in the morning, Bumble, but I'm far too excited to sleep. To-day (or rather, yesterday) is red-lettered for the rest of my life. I was presented to the Mikado, and talked to him! And then to-night—but I'd better begin at the beginning, or my eagerness to tell everything at once will land us both in chaos.

The servants were up at dawn, it seemed to me; and the very day broke with a sort of awed solemnity, that increased from hour to hour—until the arrival of an Imperial carriage sent for the Ambassador, together

with an escort of Lancers within the Compound walls, set every Japanese in the neighbourhood athrill. Toshi's hands trembled when she was hooking me up, and every minute or two she drew in her breath with a fearsome "*Aih!*" Was I not going to see the Son of Heaven, the Glorious One, the Divine?

The entire retinue of servants and passersby outside prostrated themselves, or stood with bowed heads and hats off, when we actually set forth for the Palace. It was half-past ten in the morning, when we left the Embassy—a dashing procession: first Mr. Chesleigh, very imposing and Chesterfieldian, in the Emperor's gold and black carriage, with a Court dignitary beside him, and the company of Lancers on horseback carrying red and white Imperial banners. Court carriages with the Secretaries and naval and military attachés of the Embassy followed—Rodney and Vane in full dress, like the Ambassador, and the attachés in glittering full dress uniform. Then Mrs.

Chesleigh and Diana, the wives of the attachés and Eloise and I, brought up the rear in the Embassy carriages—coachmen and footmen very smart in blue hats with the American eagle, and blue coats with red white and blue pipings.

We women wore afternoon dress—mine was a very simple grey charmeuse, for which Toshi and I had to concoct an impromptu train—and I had a rather sweet white hat with white pansies. But one wasn't thinking much about clothes, during that strangely impressive ride.

The footmen ran ahead to clear the way, and all along the wide streets, the throng of kimonoed people stool still and did obeisance to the Imperial carriage; jinrickshas and street-cars stopped, and passengers alighted respectfully; while the police and even a squad of schoolboys stood at attention, as we rolled past on our—to them—sacred quest. This profound reverence was so contagious, oneself began to feel tremulously awed—almost religious, as one drew near the

great stone walls that hid the Heir of the Sun Goddess.

Finally we reached the Moat: a queer sensation, sweeping boldly over the royal bridges, past the white-pagoda guardhouses through giant gates, along avenues of stately trees, up into the very holy of holies: the enclosure of the Palace itself. I, a democratic American, confess to having had a lump in my throat all the way. Not for imperial majesty—because I think the divinest part of any ruler is that he is a man; but the history of heroic loyalty and sacrifice, the unique character of an united and devoted people, crystallised in this enshrined object of their love. It is the Japanese attitude, not the Mikado himself, that makes one feel different towards him than towards any other monarch.

To go back to our audience, the Grand Master of Ceremonies, and the Minister of the Household, Minister of Foreign Affairs and other officials, met us at the entrance of the Palace—a low, rambling build-

ing in the old Japanese style, but with very modern red carpets—and all the dignitaries were in gold-braided European dress.

Mr. Chesleigh, who bore important messages to the Mikado from the President, was first received alone by the Emperor; then he and the other men rejoined us, and the entire party proceeded to the beautiful Peony Hall. There, against a background of rich carved wood, and exquisite old lacquered screens, a lovely little lady in grey-blue European dress—magnificent pearls, hair quite à la Française—graciously acknowledged our homage to the Empress.

Eloise had coached me about my bows and curtseys so I wasn't nervous; and the Empress was very simple and "easy." Through an interpreter, she spoke to each of us; asking some kindly question about our journey or impression of Japan. She greatly admired Diana's golden hair, and smilingly explained how when Europeans first came to Japan, the Japanese thought any kind of light hair meant an aged person—

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"As we are all black," the interpreter added naïvely, "except the old ones."

After the Empress had spoken to each of us, we curtsied and bowed again and backed to the door, accompanied by the Lady-in-Waiting. And that part was over.

In compliment to the newly-arrived Ambassador, Mrs. Chesleigh, arrangements for the audience included an invitation to luncheon for the entire party. But we went back to the Embassy meanwhile, to rest and freshen up a bit—incidentally be photographed by a small army of camera men camped upon the premises; then returned to the Palace for luncheon at half past twelve.

Everybody gathered first in the Room of One Thousand Seeds—a sumptuous big hall, with no furniture but gorgeous woodcarvings and panels and lovely great vases of flowers. Various members of the Imperial family came in, the men in uniform, the women in European dresses and hats.

And at last—the Emperor! A lithe, com-

pact, keen-looking man in khaki, whose eyes in one quick glance seemed to take in the whole room, with no need for explanations. His greetings were crisply cordial, and he seemed to have a genuine interest in each successive person presented to him. I was almost the last, being unofficial, and certainly never expected any personal word of recognition. But it seems he had been told I was father's daughter, and he looked at me with quite a sharp but kind expression, as he said:

"Madame, we in Japan have profound respect for our beloved parents. I am thinking what a boon to you, to enjoy the wise guidance of a father like yours. He brought sympathetic understanding and true service to the Orient."

I was so overcome, I could hardly reply (we talked through an interpreter, of course). But I managed to say that I remembered from childhood my father's interest and admiration for Japan, and his

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great reverence for His Majesty's "sublime father."

And the Emperor looked very pleased, and asked the gentleman-in-waiting to thank me for "these honourable and forever-to-be-remembered words." And then I backed away and followed Eloise in the procession led by their Majesties into the nearby luncheon room.

I thought I had been rather scared and school-girlish, but E. squeezed my hand and whispered, "Splendid! You couldn't have done better." So I was relieved, and enjoyed lunch.

The room where we had it was very large, with glass on one side, and an enchanting view on to the garden. The table was set European fashion (there were about forty of us) with the Emperor and Empress in the centre, quantities of the most marvellous pale pink orchids in silver dishes, lovely little silver souvenir boxes at each place, and last but by no means least—perfectly scrumptious food.

I sat between two of the younger officials of the Household—one of whom, Count Taro, had lived ten years in Paris, and we carried on quite a lively French conversation. And the Emperor kept sending messages to Mrs. Chesleigh and Eloise—asking questions about America; and healths were drunk, the President's and the Mikado's, then the Ambassador's and Mrs. C.'s, and it was all very festive.

Finally we went back to the Hall of One Thousand Seeds, and their Majesties and the Imperial party took leave; then the rest of us returned at our leisure through a succession of perfectly lovely rooms, to find our carriages. So it ended! But to-morrow we are all to go over to the Palace and sign our names in the Imperial books. Eloise says that now I've had an Audience, I shall be received also by the Imperial Princes and Princesses at their palaces.

But by far the most beautiful part of the experience for me, was that little personal speech of the Emperor's about father.

Wasn't it charming in him? I was so proud to have the Chesleighs and everybody hear; and of course all the rest of Tokio had heard by night, and the British Embassy dinner, which rounded off our gala day.

About forty dined, in honour of the Prime Minister; and your Nancy the only unofficial woman present. All the rest were Ambassadors or Ministers' wives, in trains and tiaras—very impressive; and the men looked so nice in all their decorations and uniforms.

I went in with Baron Nimamura (a Japanese millionaire) and had Mr. Verrek on my other side. You know I rather like him now. We went to tea with him and Lady Gertrude the other day, and Eloise got him to show us his pictures. It turns out he's an artist, a pupil and intimate friend of Henner; and has taken several Salon prizes—one *Premier Prix!*

What an absolutely different impression one has of a person, after seeing his true self in his work. It's an utterly different

creature from the one he exhibits in society.

I said so, frankly, to Mr. Verrek; and he said, "Yes—one would hardly take one's soul to a garden party. Small talk was invented as an armour for warding off bores, and the majority of people who don't count."

I think he counts, decidedly; after having seen his splendidly colourful canvases. And I find he can talk, *à deux*, as well as Vane—and more real meat in it. He just doesn't bother till he's interested.

We had a beautiful time at dinner; only every little while I had to turn, conscience-stricken, and talk to my Baron Japanese. Thank heaven he spoke English. Sometimes they don't; and then, Eloise says, at dinner it is awful.

My conversations with the Japanese I've met, are a cross between a Berlitz lesson and the revised primer. They go like this:

"You spik Japanese, Madame?"

"I am sorry! But you—you speak English splendidly. You have lived in England, perhaps?"

"Yes."

"You liked it?"

"Yes."

Then a heavy pause. After which,

"You have been Japan before, sometimes?"

"Yes. Seventeen years ago."

"Ah! You lig it?"

"Oh, very much."

"Ah! That is nize."

Then another thick interval, while both eat busily.

The food was wonderful (it always is, with these accomplished diplomatic chefs) : everything served on silver plate, and large gilt portraits of Mary and George, Edward and Alexandra, gazing down magnificently upon us.

After dinner, I had coffee with Madame Kariwara (the Lady-in-Waiting we met at the opera, you remember). She was quite splendid in European dress, tiara and diamond dog-collar; and said nice things about

the impression I had made with their Majesties.

Sir Francis too was a dear. Took me off to show me his porcelains and his grandson's picture; and spoke with an almost fatherly pleasure of my "success at Court," and that the Japanese were "delighted" with me.

Well, it is nice to be praised; and I do like talking with these men of world-wide intelligence, Bumble. They are twice as interesting as the women, whose spirit as well as complexion seems to wilt out here; while the men look only becomingly bronzed, and more fit and keen than ever.

Sir Francis and Dr. Hu and I had a brisk conversation about the war. They tried to draw me out about American neutrality; while I, in turn, politely probed for all the information I could get about Yuan Shi Kai, and the extent of Japanese machinations in China! One hears so much about Chinese politics here—an extraordinary situation! As Sir Francis said to me after-

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wards, "the Chinese would much rather sit and wonder what is zero, than organise a government." I'm not sure they aren't right, after all—at least as right as the machine-made nationalists of Western countries, who in the perpetual seethe of politics have forgotten what a free nation stands for.

Anyhow, we had an interesting discussion about it. Dr. Hu is Chinese Minister here, and used to be in Washington. He, too, spoke to me of father. Wasn't I an idiot ever to think Dad narrow, or his work insignificant? I see now how universally he is respected.

Baron de Roche and Vane were at the dinner too, and we three had a sparkling time, helping Mr. Verrek draw cartoons of us all on the back of his menu. You see, in spite of being official, thanks to Lady Neff's genius it was a delightfully informal party. And I've been having a teeny flirtation with de Roche—he is so sophisticated, and at the same time so naïve—so I teased him a little by being nice to Mr. Verrek. And Señor

Posada strolled over, and paid marvellous compliments in his "precious" Castilian; and Count Kollavsky begged Lady Neff to ask me to sing. And altogether, as Eloise said when we got home, it was my party; and I loved it, and had a perfect time.

And yet . . . is it all quite as satisfying as I anticipated? Undoubtedly I'm getting what I came for—colour, and variety, brilliant intercourse, and an outlet for the expression of one's own individuality. And I mean to take every advantage of this splendid chance for self-development, by companionship with men of depth and distinction—like Sir Francis and Mr. Verrek and Dr. Hu; and the best of the women, like Lady Neff.

But as I've said before it *is* a little disconcerting to find certain others just Lily Moores and Marie Taylors, with titles tacked on. I mean the same old envyings and jealousy. I know Lady Gertrude doesn't like me—particularly since her brother begins to show signs of paying less

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attention to Diana Chesleigh (with millions), and more to the obscure widow, which is *me*.

To-night Lady Gertrude and Madame Tarascon (the French Secretary's wife) held a loudly virtuous conversation, pitched for my hearing, about short skirts. I was wearing one about six inches from the ground, and a perfectly lovely dress, Bumble, if I do say it. They tried to draw Lady Neff into it (the conversation I mean, not my frock) but were disappointed; as her ladyship returned smilingly that she agreed "women of our age can't carry off those fetching short frocks that look so charming on young things like Mrs. Graydon."

Isn't she a brick? And she asked me to be in a pageant she wants to organise for the Red Cross; and Eloise is quite elated. She says I'm launched now, especially since Lady Neff has taken me up; and that the women will be after my scalp, but it doesn't matter.

And Baron Nimamura was sufficiently interested (in spite of the Berlitz) to ask

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Eloise if he might give a dinner for me. And to-morrow Vane has a luncheon and the Chesleighs a dinner and box party for the new plays at the Imperial theatre; and Saturday we are to motor to Miyanoshita for the week-end,—just de Roche and ourselves, and the two V's.

So notwithstanding one's occasional disappointments in spots, it's great fun, all in all. And now I must tumble in and get some sleep, before another big day to-morrow.

Yours really happily,

NANCY.

P. S.—Mr. Verrek is to manage the Lady Neff's pageant. It will be rather jolly, I think.

American Embassy, Tokio,
September 30, 19—.

Bumble, I have met the most wonderful woman! And isn't it reassuring to know there is one, among the rather disappointing mass of Tokio femininity? As I've told you, the women here aren't keen like the men;

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but seem taken up with clothes, and promotions, and whispering little scandals about one another. They don't care to read, or do much of anything but go out to tea, and give dinners.

Eloise is different. She's a worker. But so busy with her Chesleights and Gorrings and other people, I don't see her alone much. And even her mind is given over to Rodney and their affairs—she hasn't time for extraneous things, such as the books and reviews that interest me.

But Mrs. Fargo! A beautiful white-haired widow, about fifty—tall and exquisitely slender; with great dark eyes, and the most expressive long hands I ever saw. Her husband was in Cleveland's cabinet, and she still keeps her home in Washington, but has lived all over the earth. She has a great fortune, and is interested in Oriental things, and has taken a house here, to spend a year in Tokio.

We had lunch with her on Monday; the loveliest house, all dusky gold and grey, and

or my dear, such footmen! Chinese and seven feet tall if they're an inch; and with gorgeous crimson brocade jackets, and purple petticoats, and round amber-buttoned black satin caps. I could hardly take my eyes off the one who ushered us into the drawing-room; but then I saw Mrs. Fargo, and forgot all about him.

You know that instant electric sympathy—the thrill of recognition when you meet *your kind*? I think Mrs. Fargo felt it too; for she looked at me quite eagerly, and repeated, “*I am glad to meet you.*” And for once the words weren’t banal, but rang true and satisfactory.

Luncheon was like a needle-bath—really! After the nonchalant running wit of the usual diplomatic party, the talk at Mrs. Fargo’s was a tonic shower. She wakes people up—a dig here, a prod there; even de Roche was startled out of his indolent epigrams into a lively discussion of French philosophy and the Catholic church.

We were only six at lunch: Mrs. Fargo,

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Eloise and I, Dr. Hu, de Roche and Captain Adair (from the British Embassy). And we had it under the pergola, in the midst of the beautiful big garden; and looked very smart and summery, and exactly like a cover of *Town and Country*.

The conversation turned to Japan—as it usually does, sooner or later; and Mrs. Fargo asked me for a “veracious first impression.”

“Be honest,” she said. “Didn’t you think when you first landed that the traditional Land of Flowers and Fuji was all a fairy tale? I was so disappointed I wanted to sit down on the curb and weep. Drab houses, ugly vacant-looking people with their inefficient shuffling shoes, impudent servants—and then the smells! In this supposed realm of the exquisite and ethereal!”

House-hunting in “this great sprawling, spineless Tokio,” and the *nubi*, she said (that steaming summer heat) put the finishing touches. And thanks to the blunder of arriving in July, she saw no sign of Fuji, or a

flower of any kind, for weeks. On the other hand, she has revelled in Japanese art and literature, especially the familiar poetry and legends interpreted by Kiku, her companion; from whom she has also learned a bit of the language and *mœurs du pays*. But she still is not over-fond of Japan—"which too closely resembles another nation that has required the whole world to teach it where patriotism leaves off, and acquisitive egotism begins."

Dr. Hu spoke up then, and said he thought the Japanese devotion to their own was splendid. "Only they need to recognise us all as their own, and themselves as ours. We want not to lose, but to extend their wonderful loyalty."

I thought it was rather sweet, that inclusive "we"—as though all of us, Chinese, Americans, English, French, gathered there—and the whole universe, were one family. He went on to say that we could prove, from our knowledge of the superficial criticism each has heard and resented for his own

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country, that the things that irritate us in other countries are not the truth of their real character.

"The truth about a nation," he declared, "is the best about that nation—whatever it may be. The truth about America is freedom and representative government; not politics and graft. Just as the truth about Japan is heroic loyalty and self-effacement; rather than acquisitiveness and greed. Superficial evils, no matter what they are, can never be anything but temporary—since, in the nature of it, evil is restless and demands perpetual change. But the basic principles of a nation's being are unchanging and immortal; and the great Principle behind each, one and the same."

He beamed round on us all, like a brown old angel; and I do think he's a dear, and a great man, Bumble. So simple, with all his insight, and he makes things so clear and plain.

You should have seen his valiant attempts at maintaining Chinese courtesy, when de

Roche and I were doing some of the new dances, after lunch! Dr. Hu sat there, in his beautiful grey brocade robes, politely applauding; but I could see he was intensely amused, and he retired at intervals behind his fan.

We had coffee on the *lanai*—where Mrs. Fargo has her Victrola; and Kiku, the little Eurasian companion, joined us and brought some delicious Japanese sweets. She is an exotically lovely little creature, with white satin skin, masses of black hair most artistically arranged, and long dark eyes that gaze out enigmatically from beneath her dense lashes. And she wore a dream of a mauve kimono, with pale pink azaleas stencilled on it.

Eloise says it is terribly difficult for these Eurasian girls, who are out of their element with both Europeans and Japanese; and whose position is equivocal to say the least. I remembered your suggestion in a recent letter—that “the Eurasian is the inharmonious product of the union of the flesh, before

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the union of the spirit of West and East has been completed." However do you "get" these Oriental things so correctly?

I did enjoy that luncheon. Eloise looked rather abstracted during most of the talk, and later said it was too deep for her. She said she was thinking about that wretched train (Mrs. Chesleigh wavers between a chrysanthemum design and morning glories with trellises!); but that I was to be commended for having listened so attentively, and thus ingratiated myself with a rich woman of importance.

Perhaps she didn't put it quite so baldly, but almost; and I was a little irritated and disappointed in Eloise. When I asked how could any one think of money, when in the presence of charm and individuality like Mrs. Fargo's, she looked skeptical—as though I were trying to pose. Must it always be tactics, with Eloise, and diplomacy?

Vane hinted that she and Rodney take it too seriously; that it isn't as though one's career in American diplomacy were progres-

sive and permanent. He has a shrug for the whole system; says it is the best thing for him, "because it takes so little brains, and is amusing in spots—meeting people like you and Mrs. Fargo, for example." But that this is rare, and there's no one in Tokio one would really want to see again, except the Neffs and Verrek and ourselves.

The rest, Vane declares, are "unrelenting bores."

Of course he doesn't mean half he says; but he *is* amusing, and brings a spontaneous zest and sparkle to everything. By no means ignorant, either. He took me to the Shiba temples the other day, and gave me a perfect feast of Japanese and Chinese art, explaining their relation one to the other. And when he saw how interested I was, confessed rather sheepishly that he had written a little book about it, and would give me a copy—"to pack your boots with."

The temples are magnificent. We went on a rainy day, but that makes no difference to the pious Japanese. There was just as

big a crowd as when it's fine. And I love it in Japan when it rains. The little children go about in clusters under their wide amber-coloured umbrellas, clacking along on their high wooden shoes, like gay dragon-flies with scarlet sashes. These umbrellas also form a very decorative background for the Japanese lady; and taken together with the immense hats and straw coats of the coolies, make the streets more fascinating than in the sunshine.

I like too the mysterious, black curtained rickshas, with just a piquant glimpse of a pair of eyes or exquisitely dressed head, as they flash by.

It had cleared when we came out of the last temple—a marvel of old gold lacquer, gorgeous beasts in colour and beautiful bronze lamps and doors. And we walked home—through the most lovely paths, between rows of cryptomeria trees and pines; up little steps, and down beside little streams—crossing them by black, flat stones. And

both Vane and I are tall, and our stride matched perfectly.

I adore walking, you know. How any one can find it dull—! To me it's skimming the earth, as when you swim, you skim the sea. And we flew along, talking and laughing, and not noticing when we came to Ginza. Till suddenly Vane said, "Quick! Get behind this pastry cart. It's the *doyenne*—Countess de Regny. If she sees me, she'll ask me to dinner!"

He was positively terrified. Now Eloise would jump at an invitation from the Comtesse—so would almost anybody here; while imagine the Lily Moores and Mrs. Twickenhams! All the inhabitants of all the Brinnsvilles would implore the gods for one of her cards. But Vane calmly announces he can't be bored with an old woman who sniffles, *doyenne* or no *doyenne*; and we stayed in hiding behind the pastry-cart, till she disappeared!

Point of view is a strange and complex quantity.

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But while I agree with Vane that there are occasional bores, even in this exalted society—what if some of the women are dull or catty, and some of the men fatuous and over-eager to flirt? You find those types everywhere, and I'm not going to let them spoil the nice ones for me, or interfere with my determination to grow and get all the interest and amusement I can in this many-sided world of diplomacy.

Good-bye, Bumble dear. I hope the strike is over, and everything going well with you and Brinnsville. Did I ever really live there? It seems farther and farther away, as one is carried along in this fascinating larger life.

Love from
NANCY.

American Embassy, Tokio,
October 1, 19—.

My precious Glory;

The mail is just in, and I have your letter about your father's new operation, and his

poor old sufferings and everything. I so hope things are better with you now; but am relieved to know that, in any event, Barry will only too eagerly see you through.

He is devoted to you, in a deep, silently worshipful sort of way; that's beginning to be more and more expressive with him now. In his letters to me he speaks of you so tenderly,—do make him happy by letting him do anything he can.

As for me, since the Presentation I wrote you about, I've gone so fast,—rushing from one party to another, and sightseeing in between—Toshi, Eloise's maid, announced this morning: "Graydon-San live all same moving picture. Hurree, hurree, queeck!"

She is a wonderful mimic. You should hear some of the imitations of Eloise and myself with which she regales her husband, the cook, when she thinks no one is about. Masterpieces!

In the morning, the first thing I see is Toshi's shining black head, newly dressed and tied with scarlet crêpe, as she arranges

the window-curtains. But before that, there are the various "waking up" noises; the old coolie, brushing gravel in the compound, the clack of *geta* (those everlasting wooden shoes), the whistle of a pipe cleaner. And then the Chancery "boy" comes over with the papers, and Toshi brings them in, and the breakfast, and stands by my bed and talks.

Sometimes she has "A Dream" on her back, and will tell me all the wonderful things he does, and how she knows he will be another Prince of the People "all same Honourable Ito."

The children in the compound are so adorable, with their round bobbing black heads and gay kimonos. They always curtesy to us, and say "*Konichiwa*" or "Goo' morning"; and the small girls bring still smaller ones on their backs, to exhibit at my window; and are enraptured when they are noticed.

After breakfast, there is the post, or errands to Yokahama, by Watanabe, the cook. Then Eloise is off to slave for Mrs. Ches-

leigh and Diana—consultations at the Embassy, or curio hunting with the Gorrings and Madama Saint Didier; while I do my letters and practice and read.

I'm working really quite hard at my voice—Herr Greber would be delighted; and Mrs. Chesleigh graciously informs me it has "remarkable *carrying* quality. We can hear your persevering efforts at the Embassy."

You see that family still appreciates me!

Yesterday morning, Mrs. Fargo came to take me for a walk. I wrote you about meeting her—the lovely white-haired widow; but she's so brisk and young, the hair seems like a masquerade. She loves to walk, as I do, and having many things in common, we cover the ground—both physical and intellectual—very rapidly.

I think you would call Mrs. Fargo the complete woman of the world at her best. Very little escapes those wonderful eyes; but she has also the fine quality of discretion. I can't quite make out what she thinks of this Tokio society; only she laughs a little,

gently, at the Coronation fuss; and say she supposes life must be made worth living, even for diplomatists.

I am going to Nikko with her, when Eloise and Rodney take their vacation next week. You know Nikko is the famous mountain resort, where the Emperor has his Summer Palace. Mrs. F. has a little Japanese house there. Won't it be delightful?

I'll be glad when poor Eloise gets off to the baths. She looks half dead, with all Mrs. Wilmer's duties (the absent First Secretary's wife) and her own weighing her down. Just now it is the Coronation pictures—for the American newspapers you know. Even Diana Chesleigh is having herself done, though the Ambassadors' daughters are not invited to the Coronation; and Eloise tried to inveigle me into being photographed and sent on as "a guest of the Embassy!"

She conscientiously avoids slighting me to the advantage of Diana, and vice versa; till one begins to wonder if she knows which of us she actually prefers in her own mind. I

don't like to think of Eloise as insincere, but I can't help seeing that a good part of the time she is "playing her hand."

For example, at the Chesleigh's theatre party the other night—but I must tell you about that. They had twelve for dinner and the new plays at the Imperial theatre. The programme changes once a month. There are several pieces (it begins about five o'clock) and you rush home between times to eat; or else dine there in the theatre restaurant—which I should think would be better, as otherwise you lose almost an entire play.

And they are far too wonderful for that. The Imperial Theatre is the finest I have ever seen, not excepting those in France. For besides being the best actors in the world, the Japanese have the advantage of their gorgeous mediæval costumes and scenery—many of the plays being laid in the magnificent period of the Shoguns. And the classic language of the stage, spoken in a curious falsetto, has a certain rhythm that gets into one's head; just like Oriental music, after

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the ear becomes tuned to the different rate of vibration.

The important characters come on to the stage by a sort of runway to the side of the boxes, and leave in the same manner. While instead of the curtain going down, the scenery collapses, revolves, and is entirely changed, before one's eyes. Long before we had it, the Japanese used revolving scenery. Another very effective feature is the sort of Greek chorus, stationed at either side; and the use of gongs, bells, loud drums and chanting, to prelude profound emotion or tragedy.

Men frequently take the women's parts; and marvellously well, as there used not to be any real women allowed. But now they have excellent actresses; and both men and women are very carefully trained, from the time they are eleven years old, on to their début at about twenty. All this I learned from Mr. Grelle, our Japanese Secretary, who has lived out here for years, and knows

more about Japan than the natives themselves, *they* say.

He translates the synopses of the plays into English, for the foreign programme; and is splendid to sit next to, because he explains everything. I wish you could have heard him interpreting "*The Fate of a Belle-Dame*"!

She was a gorgeously wicked old thing, who made a living by luring travellers into her hut, and squashing them in bed, with a large stone let down from the ceiling. Then her two woodchopper friends would conveniently chuck the unfortunate into a nearby moat, while the belle-dame pocketed his money.

But like every wicked old woman, she had a very virtuous daughter; who was perpetually begging her mother to reform. All she got for her pains was a cuff, and the reminder to look sharp, and fetch in any passer-by—as times were hard. And who should come along but a handsome young acolyte from Kyoto, who is really the god-

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dess Kwannon in disguise; but the virtuous daughter doesn't know it, and of course she falls in love with him and can't bear to have *him* squashed, and tries to help him escape. But the mother catches her.

And so he gets killed anyhow; but when the wicked old horror rushes in to gloat over her prey, instead of a gory corpse she sees a beautiful light, and the goddess Kwannon in the midst of it. Whereupon she is instantly overcome with repentance, and tactfully expiates her sins by jumping into the fatal moat herself; leaving the daughter divided between sorrow for a forever-respected parent, and joy that the sinner has reformed and will go to "*Meido*."

So much for the Japanese moral; which is generally filial or religious, instead of dwelling on the personal emotions like ours. And I don't know why I've taken up so much room telling you about it, Glory, except that I thought it might amuse you to know what a Japanese play is like. They can do very clever up-to-date things too; one piece about

an impecunious young doctor trying to appear important and rich, to get patients, was as good as a French farce.

The theatre was crowded—many more people than at the opera, as the Japanese are devoted to their own plays. And the pale high-bred faces and rich dark kimonos of the aristocratic audience, dotted here and there with brilliant groups of geisha, made it an attractive scene. The man in the box next to ours—very smart, but bent on comfort—sat with his white-stockinged feet up on the rail; and another used a large quill toothpick at intervals. But these are details, of an otherwise “elegant” evening!

I must say the Chesleights do things well—excepting the family tact. When I told Diana how I had enjoyed the party, and thanked her for inviting me, she returned kindly, “Oh that’s all right, Mrs. Graydon!” For a daughter of diplomacy, wasn’t it sublime?

I can’t imagine her married to fastidious Mr. Verrek—though that is obviously what

her mother and Lady Gertrude, and even sometimes Eloise, are working toward. I think, however, that at the present point Eloise is torn between the politic opportunity of abetting a splendid match for her Ambassador's daughter, and the friendly desire to capture the First Eligible of Tokio for me!

Her divided manœuvres are quite transparent. The other night at the theatre, she was half delighted, half upset, because for a while Mr. Verrek sat next to me, and we grew rather absorbed in a between-acts talk about the Red Cross pageant.

That's another thing that bothers Eloise. Lady Neff is organising this pageant affair, and has asked me to help; and now she has turned the whole thing over to Mr. Verrek. He's an artist, you know—a very clever one—and good at posing tableaux and dances. We've had some rather interesting talks about colour, and Oriental stuffs, since I saw his pictures and we began really to know one another; and now he and Lady

Neff want me to "dress" the tableaux, besides taking part in the vaudeville end of the programme.

It is great fun, and I shall love doing it; if only it doesn't make complications with Eloise. Sometimes she seems genuinely pleased about it; then again, after she has been with the Chesleights or Lady Gertrude, she appears worried and annoyed by the whole situation.

She even went so far as to warn me, after the theatre the other night, that Lady Gertrude said "Noel" positively could not marry a woman without money, no matter how attractive she might be. And then Eloise paused emphatically; for me to declare my exact income, I suppose!

It's all rather sordid and disgusting, and I am beginning to think this calculating official atmosphere has altered my dear old-time Eloise. She frankly hasn't time for "people who don't signify," like my steamer friends the Nelsons, who were so kind to me when I had nobody; and whom I should

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have liked to have had meet Eloise, and see a little of the Embassy.

But she "hadn't a minute," the week they were here; and didn't like it because I spent two or three mornings with "just ship acquaintances, who can't do a thing for you."

However, in some ways, no one could be more thoughtful than she and Rodney—always planning for me, and taking me everywhere—I shall never forget their kindness and this so interesting visit. And Eloise has been angelic about helping me get some frocks and things. Of course she knows all the best shops, and her taste is exquisite.

We were in Yokohama yesterday, shopping and paying calls. It's rather a tiring business, going back and forth forty minutes each way in the train. Then invariably when we go to Yokohama, the tailor chooses that day to come to Tokio. We dash from the station to our favourite Go Lee, only to be met with the stolid statement: "She go Tokio."

Gender is not included in a strictly tail-

ored English course; and sprightly young Chinese males, fathers of families, and staid grandpapas are unblushingly referred to as "She."

The Chinese are much better at dressmaking than the Japs, and do a thriving business in Yokohama. You'd be surprised to see the lovely clothes they can make—and so cheap. My frock for the Emperor's Ball—pale rose brocade with Georgette draperies—is to cost thirteen dollars, making and everything! And it's quite as soft and pretty as Mrs. Gorring's or Diana's "Callot models" they talk about with bated breath.

After "trying on," I ran off to tea with the Digbys (you remember, the pretty Yokohama woman with the baby, who was on our boat.) Eloise protested about my going to see them—thought I should go back to Tokio with her to call on Madame de Regny; we had rather a crisp little discussion about it, in the lounge of the Grand Hotel.

E. spoke kindly but significantly of "the business people of Yokohama," in compari-

son with "the important ones of our own diplomatic set." And I said all those distinctions and divisions were incomprehensible to me; that the only two sets I knew were the people I liked and those I didn't; and that I certainly wanted to go to see the Digbys, who were my friends.

So I did. And they were as nice as ever—she is the fair petite type, and he tall and dark and lively; and they do make one feel comfortable and at home. We had tea on the lawn, and they teased me about the grandeur I'd fallen heir to, in visiting the Embassy. It was really funny how they knew everything I'd done—and a good deal I hadn't—these past three weeks.

That is Yokohama and Tokio. Each keeps a spy-glass trained on the other, Mr. Digby says; and the result (as far as I can see) is a mass of highly inaccurate information, giving each side a distorted idea of the other. Diplomacy considers trade uncouth; trade considers diplomacy lazy and incompetent. In their hasty generalisations it

never seems to occur to the business people that there are the same lazy, snob types with them as with the diplomats; or any other collection of human beings. While the fastidious diplomatists remain blissfully unconscious of the commercial spirit rife among themselves.

When I got home yesterday afternoon, Eloise—deep in consultation with Lady Gertrude and Mrs. Gorrington—laughingly referred to “Nancy’s friends in trade.” Which I thought was rather good, spoken to these two friends of hers: one of whom, she candidly told me, is here to trade invitations for hotel bills, and the other making every effort to exchange her brother’s future title for the Chesleigh millions.

But I’ve noticed that this diplomatic set, with all their light glancing wit, are curiously without objective humour about themselves. Not Vane, of course; there are always individuals—just like you and Bumble in Brinnsville—who have perception and see everything.

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But that's the point I've been coming to: there seems nowhere to be any one set of society that is all-admirable or congenial; but only certain ones out of the various sets, and of those a precious few.

I begin to appreciate more and more the rare spirits one knows and joyfully claims for one's very own. And that's you, darling; and I'm a miserable sinner to have written you pontifical reams, when I ought to be looking out samples for the pageant and Mr. Verrek, who is due to arrive at any minute.

He has quite waked up over this affair, and I like him very much.

Fondly, your
NANCY.

Koju-in, Nikko,
October 6, 19—.

I have decided to keep a diary—like the tourist spinsters Vane says come and afflict every one with their ugliness for a fortnight; and then go home and write a book on "Japan From Within!"

But it would be too bad to forget this novel experience; so I shall fix it for remembrance by jotting down a few things now and then—beginning with Nikko, this most beautiful spot in Japan, here with my cherished Mrs. Fargo.

We came from Tokio to-night, having first seen Eloise and Rodney into the train for Ikaou, and their much-needed vacation. Eloise was so tired she almost cried at good-bye—though we're all coming back in a week or ten days; and Rodney looked ghastly.

He just about runs the Embassy, since Mr. Wilmer isn't here; and half the time has to cut the parties, or leave in the middle to decode a message or something. A day labourer would scorn the hours Rodney keeps—talk about diplomatists not working! Of course he doesn't get much help from Vane—who ought to be ashamed, if he is fun, and nice in other ways; and the Ambassador, by two o'clock, thinks he's signed enough documents—all the work he ever does—and goes off to play golf. So the

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brunt of the diplomatic chores falls on poor old Rodney. And he is a faithful soul, and devoted to his work; and I do hope they both get a good rest and relief from their routine of official duties.

As an *au revoir* fête, Captain Adair gave a geisha dinner for us yesterday evening. I've been to several now, and they pall a bit after the first. You go to a tea-house (always very chic and expensive) and have a meal—principally lobster, and sickish-sweet champagne; and the geisha sing and dance for you, at intervals during the evening.

Of course these girls are the prettiest and most accomplished in Japan, being trained from babyhood as professional entertainers. Some of them last night were only twelve or thirteen; and they *are* graceful and artistic to look at—with that blue-black hair, delicate little faces and the sweetest kimono! Mrs. Fargo says they remind her very much of our better class chorus girl: the same decorative, highly artificial type; with the same absorbing interest in personal appear-

ance and effect. She tried to take some moving pictures of a group of geisha in her garden, but couldn't get much; as they were constantly breaking up the pose to powder their noses, or peer into the little mirrors tucked in their long sleeves.

It's too bad, for their dancing and posturing is exquisite. I liked the odd minor of the singing too, and the monotonous twangy rhythm of the *samisen*. We sat on the floor, of course, in a big bare room looking out onto a lovely garden; and the geisha when not performing, sat between us, and giggled and tried on our jewels and showed us how to use chop-sticks. They haven't a great variety of tricks.

Afterwards we went on to the Yoshiwara—the famous Tokio underworld colony, where a separate little city is contained within imprisoning gates—all sorts of shops, tea houses, and even temples for the use of the hundreds of girls here enslaved. They are sold into the life for a period of three or six years—(an entirely different class from the

geisha, who are free). It is an extraordinary and gruesomely depressing sight: to stand at the intersection of any two streets, look in any direction, to behold everywhere rows upon rows of girls behind bars. For in Tokio they sit, brilliantly kimonoed, in their little cages—open to the street; and pitifully try to attract the free passers-by.

How can people call such things “interesting,” or take one to see them? It left such a horrible impression, I could scarcely sleep all night. We’ve all been feeling low, anyhow, on account of the *nubi*, which has been awful lately—one’s dressing-gown in the mornings positively wet, after the drenching fog; and gloves and everything mildewed, and the heat unbearable. It was the greatest relief to escape from Tokio, up to this exhilarating mountain air.

I was thrilled with Nikko as a child—when it seemed the whole Arabian Nights come true; and felt “lifted,” as Vane says, just at the thought of seeing it again. Then Mrs. Fargo—so alert and distinguished in her

smart tweed travelling frock—was enough to put heart into any one. We met at Uyeno Station (on the other side of Tokio from the Embassy) and did the five hours' journey in great comfort—a compartment to ourselves, and tea and the loveliest cakes out of Mrs. Fargo's tea-basket; and then—as the train sped through the rice-fields and began to climb the mountain—a great talk about diplomacy and women and Eurasians and a little of everything on earth.

I was tremendously interested in what Mrs. Fargo had to say; because I'm free to confess within the safe covers of my diary, there are aspects of this diplomatic life—at first so attractive—that I find don't appeal to me at all. The attitude of the women, for example.

Mrs. Fargo thinks women are the same the world over, and their various social castes just like so many dresses, that they use to conceal or reveal the identical creature underneath. She says you find the catty woman, the shallow vain woman, the lazy

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woman and the snob; whether in official Tokio, or aristocratic London, or an American small town. (I thought of Brinnsville!) Also—as rare in one society as in another—the generous, and intelligent, and altogether charming types.

She thinks, just as I wrote Glory the other day, that it's a question of the individual everywhere; but that the women in diplomacy, particularly the Americans, are strangely indifferent to their opportunity. Many of them don't even bother to learn French—the language of diplomatic intercourse; and are content with a mere smattering of superficial information about international affairs, or those of the country they're stationed in—their chief concern being with such weighty matters as who sits next, or the size of Madame Chose's tiara.

Mrs. Fargo smiled not unkindly at "our present incumbents." Speaking of Aunt Augusta's now famous "Best People," she said, "We all have such different ideas as to who the best people are!"

Meanwhile, dusk came, we saw the lighting up of farm-houses, the twinkle of lanterns before temples and wayside shrines as we flashed past; the train sped up and up, finally crossing a large river by a very new bridge, and at eight o'clock we arrived at Nikko. Li (Mrs. F.'s butler) had a motor to meet us; and there was a mysteriously beautiful ride up the mountain, between dim giant rows of cryptomeria trees, to Mrs. Fargo's romantic "House of Light."

It's a delightful thatched-roofed cottage in very picturesque surroundings, snuggled beneath the hugest of the mountains, and overlooking the great, greenish black gorge. We had dinner on the balcony—the most heavenly sense of quiet and lofty spaciousness among the peaks—it is rather a whirl in Tokio. And now I'm up in my room, done in snowy white mats and gleaming black-rimmed paper windows—quite Japanese, like all this peaceful little house. And I thought I'd begin my diary before I went to

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bed. Thank heaven, that isn't Japanese, but a luxurious ebony four-poster!

I can pull back the *shoji*, and see the gorge and the moon and the mountains—"horrible nize," as Toshi says—and I *am* happy to be here. So, my dear Diary, *bonne nuit!*

Koju-in, Nikko,
October tenth.

We have been here four days, and are to stay six more. I wish it were sixty—actually I count the hours. So much more substance to life like this than just going to parties and listening to diplomatic chit-chat, however piquant it may be.

For, besides the tonic air and walks with Mrs. Fargo and the informal out-door atmosphere, I happen to be in Nikko for a very famous festival: the 300th anniversary of the Tokugawa family. They are the first family of Japan, next to the Mikado, and were the rulers themselves in the old feudal days. Iyeyasu Tokugawa, the greatest of

the clan, died in 1616, was deified, and buried at Nikko; where his tomb became the central motif for the magnificent temples since erected here.

We need only walk out of our back gate and round the corner, to the stately tree-bordered road that leads directly to them. And it never fails to astonish me—the grandeur and vastness of Nikko, after the dolls-house Japan one has seen hitherto. Towering mountains, great gothic forests of grey-green cryptomeria, broad suave roads, and the always alluring old steps and balustrades and stone lanterns, softly grey with age. The people, toddling along on their *geta*, look like bright-sashed pigmies, and the children mere specks within the lofty avenues of trees a hundred feet high.

As for the temples themselves—useless to attempt to describe their glories. A maze of red and black and shining gold lacquer, brilliant painted carvings, hideously gorgeous gods, innumerable inlaid birds and beasts and flowers: all this lavish elegance of

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artificial decoration, framed in the serene simplicity of nature. It is especially interesting to be here at this festival time, when thousands of pilgrims come to visit the shrine of Iyeyasu, and to witness the ceremonial "No-Dances" performed in one of the larger temples. The "No" corresponds to the English miracle play, and is danced or acted by three people—a principal and two assistants; accompanied by the same sort of Greek chorus they have in the theatre, and an orchestra of flutes and drums.

The most celebrated of all the dancers in Japan are here for this occasion, and every day we've joined the throng of native spectators before the large open temple-stage. I liked best a solo dance we saw this morning, done by a man in fifteenth century rose and gold brocade—with a horrible mask and wig; but he posed like Grace incarnate. The story, representing the exploits of the general Yorimasa, was told entirely in a series of dramatic attitudes; sometimes simply by

the marvellously expressive gestures of the fan.

Mrs. Fargo has studied Japanese drama, and symbolism, and can explain many fine points I should miss otherwise. It *has* been splendid seeing all this with her—we've really learned something of the art of Japan with the help of Vane's very illuminating little book. Better still have been our walks and discussions.

As we grew more intimate, I told Mrs. F. about James and Brinnsville, and coming off here in search of real people, and a more inspiring environment. And how it has been the least bit disappointing, since the first glamour of novelty wore off; certain standards and characteristics of this official world seeming unsympathetic and unsatisfying, just like the small town atmosphere.

I think she's seen for herself Eloise's attempts to play Diana and me off against one another, and keep each thinking she is the more attractive. But Mrs. Fargo suggested that E. is really in a rather delicate position.

That naturally she wants her friend to have a success; but hardly at the expense of Rodney's chief's daughter; and that she doubtless finds herself between two fires, without much natural subtlety to guide her.

But I said, "Wouldn't you think that two women as different as Diana Chesleigh and I, had each sufficient individuality to carry her along without encroaching on the domain of the other?" Diana is really beautiful, in a classic, perfectly moulded way; and she is refreshingly young, with a breezy, whole-souled manner that will draw plenty of people to her. I am effective, and "have salt," as Vane says; and what I lack in regular beauty, I make up in colouring and vividness generally.

So there we are, the two of us; and why there should be all this fuss about our interfering with one another's success, I don't know. But I believe it is my friendship with the V's that most disturbs Diana—and therefore Eloise.

Mrs. Fargo thinks Vane is delightful; but that it's a shame he doesn't make more of his gifts, which are brilliant and versatile, and would quickly bring him distinction, if he exerted himself a little. Verrek, we both agree, is more substantial. His talent for painting, joined to his strong British sense of responsibility, would have won him a name of his own, if he hadn't been destined to inherit a ready-made one.

However, as Mrs. Fargo says, the real significance of a title is far more profound than the mere surface prestige coveted by matchmaking American mammas. It stands for generations of men who have fought for and held their land, and stuck by each other and by the code of the clan; and whose traditions are to them live things, directing even the weakest and meanest to act within the honour of the name.

It is because people lose sight of these fine foundation principles, in their fevered search for personal power and pleasure, that society is apt to prove disappointing the world

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round, Mrs. Fargo thinks. The same old fallacy of catching at the outward and visible sign, and missing the inward and spiritual essence!

Her clear, direct point of view has helped me a lot; though with all her reasoning, she herself doesn't seem very happy. Since her husband's death, she's very much alone in the world; I believe she does all this traveling and studying just to keep her mind occupied. Of course there's a son, and a lot of relatives; but all they do is get into trouble, and cable Mrs. F. to get them out—Johnny, the son, being at present in the throes of a breach of promise suit with an operatic star!—and half a dozen sisters and cousins and nephews all more or less in hot water.

Mrs. Fargo takes them philosophically, and is hugely diverted by some of the escapades. But I think rich people have rather a hard time, and not much fun for all their envied horde. We were at Gideon Brent's yesterday—the old Yokohama widower, who has an imposing house up here;

and when he heard we were coming to Nikko, promptly posted off after us. Well, he has lots of money—made his fortune in bulbs. But what's the use? He's fifty, and knock-kneed, and ferocious taste.

Vane said, "If you go there, mind you don't sit down. The chairs bite you."

And when I saw them, I understood. All animals, and elephants' tusks and blind-folded monkeys and teak peacocks; and the cushions made of American flags! Poor Gideon is patriotic to a degree. But as he tells me every time I see him, he "needs a wife."

It's all very well to make fun of him, but people are very pleased to go to his parties, and he gives more genuine pleasure than any one out here. It was he who took us, Mrs. Fargo and me, the beautiful excursion to Chuzenji—the summer residence of the diplomats. We went as far as we could in Mr. Brent's motor; then when the path grew narrow, took rickshas up the mountain.

There's an indescribable fascination about these fragile little black carriages, winding up the majestic tree-lined roads, beneath the shadow of the brilliant hills. For it's the beginning of the maple-leaf season; and the mountains all round Nikko are a glory of reds and browns and golden yellow; with silvery little cascades bursting out of the rocks unexpectedly, and dashes of blue and white and purple and rose in the clumps of exquisite wild flowers. Along the roadside, as you climb, are little shrines with images, and lists of prayers stuck on; and every now and then a tea-house with thatched roof, and pretty maids, and a ravishing view of a waterfall.

I have loved Nikko, and I don't want to go back to town life one bit. It's such fun poking about the pawnshops and old curio stores with Mr. Brent; and having great walks and enormous teas and talks with Mrs. Fargo.

I've discovered that it isn't the parties that make one value society, but the charm

of intercourse. And one can get that—with the right person—in the desert, or an American farm-house, or a hermit's hut in Thibet.

However, I think I can manage just another dinner or two, and perhaps the Emperor's Garden Party!

American Embassy, Tokio,
October 17, 19—.

Barry, I am so upset! We came down from the mountain yesterday, and for me the descent was psychological as well. For besides the depressing thick Tokio atmosphere, I found the mail in, and Aunt Judy's disconcerting news of your being hurt, and the militia ordered out to quiet the strikers; and the death of Glory's father, and her being transferred to the Kingsleys' New York office, and goodness knows what all.

Vane has been ordered to Panama, Rodney thinks as result of his laziness and tendency to gossip, which has been heard of in Washington. And to cap everything, I got a very unsatisfactory communication from

Mr. Carp, to say the G. L. and Y. has decided not to pay a dividend this quarter; and that the stock—which is most of what I possess, has been “behaving very suspiciously.”

Then why doesn't he sell it? What do I pay him for? I never liked that man, but James always had him, so. . . . Do look into this G. L. and Y. business a little for me, Bumble. I have cabled Carp to sell the stock if it seems best; but I haven't a great amount of faith in his judgment, and would rather leave it to you, as you have my power of attorney.

I so wanted that money, to help Glory. After all, it's a relief to have her free from the draining anxiety of her father; and with this promotion to New York, and more salary, she ought at last to have a chance to draw breath and develope some of her own desires and personality.

How you'll miss her, won't you, Barry? She's often told me she never could have held on, if it hadn't been for you—“like a strong hand, in the dark.” Our lovely star-

eyed Glow! Perhaps we'll find we miss her too much to let her stay very long in New York, eh Bumble? Oh I read between the lines of your letters, my dear, and I'm so hoping to see my pet dream for you begin to materialise!

I hope, indeed, you're all right again, and won't go to any more strike-breakers' evening parties, and get your head cut open by mistake. I felt horrid faint and worried when I read about it; and Eloise didn't help things by remarking cheerily that head wounds usually proved fatal.

But Aunt Judy said you weren't bad; and Eloise is only difficult because she didn't have enough holiday, and is still tired and cross. And the social season is speeding up, these last weeks before the Coronation—receptions and dinners and things, till you can't rest.

Last night we dined with the Montaltos (Italian Ambassador) before going on to the "At Home" of the Minister of War. It was the first formal assembling of the Diplo-

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matic Corps for the season, and quite brilliant. That is, all the women had their jewels out, and more of that fat embroidery than usual. And the men just in ordinary evening clothes, but the young ones have such nice figures, and look more distinguished than our Americans, who scorn a waist.

Baron Damio, the War Minister, has been Ambassador to England, so he has a thoroughly European house—*rococo*, with lots of gilt, and marble cherubs—and a darling scrap of a wife, who looked so pretty in her dove grey gown and tiara.

There were lots of Japanese personages, some in foreign dress, but more in kimono; and a great deal of bowing and drawing in of breath, and curtseys for the foreigners. And then we were all herded into a smart little music room, and the programme began.

It was quite remarkable: Japanese playing Chopin, and Cavatina, and singing Gounod, in the finished European manner.

But oh, Bumble, a musicale is the same, the world over! There was the large lady who took high notes with great applause; the shy young thing who played the violin very badly, but looked perfectly lovely, and had a tremendous *encore*; the sonorous *basso* who hung Danny Deever and killed off the Erlking's son again; and the boy who stumbled and went through his piece three times, and broke down every time—finally going off red and anguished, and mopping his brow.

The audience sat in rows of those stiff yellow musicale chairs (that seem to reach from Tokio to Timbuctoo) and listened with the usual expressions—some rapt, some agonised, some merely absent, with that planning-to-morrow's-menu look about the eyes. But most, quite evidently wondering, "heavens, when *will* it be over?"

I could easily imagine myself back in Brinnsville, applauding the prodigies of Madame Powell or Herr Greber. And sitting between Lily Moore and Henry Daw-

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son, instead of Nina Kollavsky and Baron Tarascon.

After the music, I had supper with Lady Neff and Sir Francis—who are growing to seem a sort of glorified aunt and uncle; and the Italian Ambassador and Toodles joined us, with de Roche and the V.'s and several of the younger lights hovering agreeably in the background.

So that Eloise, coming by, called over her shoulder laughingly: "*La cour de la belle châtain!*" And made a mock *révérence*.

She is inclined to be a little ironical over my "triumphs," as she calls them. And (while always deprecating my plebeian friendships with "trade") still refers to me as "the spoiled princess," and "Queen Nancy, who won't condescend to anything lower than an Ambassador!"

But it's too childish, to be bothered by her little vagaries. I go ahead and enjoy what attention I get, just like everybody.

Dr. Hu was at the party, beautifully brocaded and beaming on the world out of his

wise humorous old eyes, as he always does. He has an effect upon one different from the rest. One feels less sparkly, more serene. His philosophy is like a fine wafer thrown into a gold-fish pool, that says to the submerged best self of every one: "Come up, come up."

We had quite a talk, about evolution and individuality and heaven and Sir Oliver Lodge. And then Mr. Verrek interrupted, for a conference about that blessed pageant; and he and I went back and sat on the deserted music room chairs, and planned and discussed and got some really good ideas.

We're going to cut Cleopatra and Martin Luther and Queen Elizabeth—those tired out tableaux old-timers—and do some original studies in modern art and colour, like "*Noir et Blanc*," "*Cubism*," "*Pastel*," etc. Mr. Verrek is making the sketches, and I am responsible for turning them into costumes—with the help of Ah Sing, Go Lee, Ron Foh, and other Chinese *couturiers*.

You can imagine it's no light task I've

undertaken, and I don't wonder Eloise feels nervous (she's always admonishing me to "work hard, and not disappoint us"). I tremble myself when I think of all the people, fat and lean, wide and narrow, blond and brown, I have to clothe—and get them into it, after it's done! But to-morrow I plunge into the vortex of tailors, dyers, silk shops; and pray heaven to have a nice comfortable insane asylum ready when it's over.

Mr. Verrek and I had great larks planning and laughing over it all, in a corner of the Damio music-room. And once Diana came by, and looked at us—I thought almost wistfully. Can it be that she cares for the man, besides the title?

Because, as far as attention goes, she has plenty of her own; and is always surrounded by a crowd of young secretaries and devotees. Vane says, maliciously, when he sees what he calls their "impecunious ardour": "You know it's worth a little trouble to bring down a dollar-princess!"

His careless cynicism can be rather cruel,

and I told him so and scolded him for his sins, when he stopped in just now for his favourite morning gossip on the *lanai*. I was sewing for Eloise—one of her Coronation dresses; and Vane did himself up in a long-legged rosette, and ravelled fringe and chattered.

He says his recall to Panama is a beastly nuisance, and only goes to show what a disgusting profession diplomacy is—so flighty, and always sending people who like Europe, to Japan or Central America. He's glad he will have a month or two for the opera, and a few civilised parties, in New York; but is not keen about seeing his family.

"They always give one such looks. And my mother says, 'how thin you are!' And my sister, 'isn't your nose rather red'? One's people are so unnecessary."

I reminded him their bank account wasn't (he's always cabling home for more money); and proceeded, as I say, to read him a friendly lecture on his cynicism and laziness

and not making more of his very real inherent ability.

And do you know, to my surprise, he seemed quite touched, and said it was years since anybody had bothered to talk to him like that; and that he knew he'd frittered, and meant to be more serious.

Then he grew quite confidential, and said what he needed was to marry; and he intended when he was at home, to get himself off. "Of course I must have a little money. My people aren't rich, and you know the overgrown tip that is our salary in diplomacy. We simply daren't marry unless the girl has a fortune of her own. But when she has, one can give her in return an amusing and sometimes exciting career; and do everything to make her life charming and agreeable."

I am sure Vane would do that; and I daresay there is foresight and common sense in these diplomatic "arranged" marriages. But they seem rather cold-blooded, and not good enough for the men one admires in

other things. With all Lady Gertrude's affirmations, I can't fancy Mr. Verrek marrying for money. He has too much imagination, and is too sensitive and sincere.

However, it *is* nice for a woman to have a little money of her own, and be able to help a man, or anybody she loves—isn't it, Bumble? And I wish that wretched stock weren't woozy, and that I were sure of my regular income.

No, I'm not contemplating matrimony! I was only speaking generally. But I suppose this constant discussion of money, and the power that belongs to it, makes me consider it more than ordinarily I would. An atmosphere does "get you," after a while. Your rather anxious,

NANCY.

33 Akasaka-cho, Tokio,
October 27, 19—.

Dearest Aunt Judy:

I am staying with my beloved Mrs. Fargo a few days, while Eloise and Rodney are at

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Miyanoshita; and we are just home from Countess de Regny's bazaar.

Of course, Lady Neff got up a pageant for the Red Cross, so of course Madame de Regny had to have a bazaar for the Belgians. It is intolerable in the East, as in Brinnsville, to let another woman get ahead of one. Especially when one's *doyenne* of the entire Diplomatic Corps, and so more important than the wife of the British Ambassador.

So the Countess rushed things, and had her party first; and everybody went, and bought sticky toffee and chocolate cake, made by the cooks of everybody else, and Mathilde de Regny's hideous wool-work, and Señora Posada's flabby tooled book-covers. It was the typical Eastern garden party: fragrant tea, quantities of delicious food; badly dressed, overanimated women, indolent, distinguished-looking men. And throughout, that insidious undercurrent, secret, smiling, sibilant: scandal. Reputations are passed round with the cake, and picked at, thrown aside, or utterly consumed, with

a careless word or two, or a meaning glance.

It reminded me directly of Brinnville and the War Relief Bazaar. You can change a name and a climate, but as I'm always discovering, jealousy and vulgar-mindedness remain the same; whether out of the mouth of Mrs. Mercer and Bessy Drayton, or Countess Kollavsky and Lady Gertrude Asche.

You know, the Brinnville Browning Society asked me to write a paper on "My Impressions of the Official East!" How funny to think of them in such awe, over there, at this rather monotonous round of dinners, bridge parties, calls and teas (much like theirs) which is worshipfully labelled "Official Society!" And their own commonplace types, with titles attached, for the "Pillars!" Though I, too, took it just as seriously, until I came to see this life for myself, from the inside.

Now, as I wrote Bumble the other day, I can positively tally up the people out here

with those at home: Baron Tarascon—Henry Dawson; Madame Kollavsky—Lily Moore; Madame de Regny—Mrs. Twickenham, etc., etc.—set about with all the underbores, and tattlers, and scandal lovers.

I confess this atmosphere is getting on my nerves. At first I was only mildly amused at the speculations concerning my hair and complexion, and the authenticity of my eyebrows. But when it comes to inquiring into my personal affairs, and suggesting that I am only a “grass” widow, and have a dress-making shop in New York, and an exotic past on the stage, the fiction becomes a bit too fantastic.

The Chesleights are more than ever annoyed with me, since—with the pageant arrangements,—I am seeing a good deal of Diana’s Mr. Verrek. Several women at the garden party, observing his attentions, kindly warned me of “Verrek’s notorious fickleness,” and many affairs; continuing, that of course he would marry some fresh

young girl, and was only amusing himself meanwhile. But that I mustn't lose my heart to these naughty flirts of men out here—"as obviously you prefer that volatile sex!"

Of course they can't conceive that one could prefer the men to the women here in the East, because the former live bigger and more useful lives, and have more sincere opinions. While they talk as individuals, they're splendid—the men I mean. It's only when they do become male—make love and flirt—that they're almost always fatuous and impossible. I've had one or two experiences I'd rather forget. There's no denying this climate does have its effect—slackening morals and tightening nerves: a bad combination. Why people send their sons to the East to *reform*—! The Clubs are hotbeds of unsavoury gossip; and in the careless insinuating speech of the set we see there's a looseness no amount of wit can make amusing, or anything but stupidly vulgar and crass.

I've been a bit upset by it all, as you can

see, Judy dear; and it is such a relief to be quietly here with Mrs. Fargo, in a different atmosphere. We have long, peaceful mornings, reading and practising. Mrs. F. is a fine pianist, and often plays the accompaniments for my songs; and sometimes Kiku, the little Eurasian companion, steals in—wonderfully kimonoed, tragically wistful—and listens, in a great chair in the corner.

In the afternoons I have rehearsals for the pageant, or jaunts to Yokohama, and consultations with Mr. Verrek. I like him so much, Aunt Judy: tall and fit, with fair hair and moustache—most becoming with that deep Eastern tan. Then he's so beautifully at home with his clothes and himself and his environment—everything. No one has that perfect ease like the well-born Englishman.

But I do feel sorry for them too—English eldest sons, I mean. Mr. Verrek would like to do nothing but paint; and certainly could have had a great career, if he hadn't had to inherit. The title Eloise and most other people see as a halo round his head, is really

a kind of stone about his neck. For it was that—having to do something for his country, while politely waiting for Lord Gresham to die—that forced him to leave Paris and the studios, and undertake diplomacy

We have had some interesting talks, and he's told me a good deal about things, confidentially. This afternoon we went shopping in Nakadori, for the tableaux; and of course met the whole world, before we'd turned the corner. There are so few foreigners in Tokio, and all of them in the same quarter, and out at the same hour; one can't budge without informing the entire Diplomatic Corps.

Verrek has a wonderful fashion of gazing royally over their heads; but it does exasperate me to have my affairs made public property. All one can do is grin and bear it—the tiresome curiosity, for the fun one gets on the side.

And it was too lovely in Nakadori, browsing round among beautiful old kimono, and brocades. Verrek speaks Japanese easily,

and all the shop-keepers worship him, and bow to the ground when he appears. We took off our shoes, and went in and upstairs at the most interesting places; and sat on our feet, Japanese fashion, while sweet little *nes-san* served pale green tea, in cups of egg-shell, and "*dona-san*" ("the master") spread his treasures on the mats before us.

We saw some dreams of kimonos, and bought the prettiest for the tableaux; and an ivory white, with pale opalescent peacock all over the back, for me. Verrek said: "You've got to let me paint you in it—with your hair let down, like a veil of flame. Say you will!"

He's delightfully impetuous, you see, Aunt Ju; and for all his thirty-one years, a very boy for enthusiasm and impulsive eagerness, but thoroughly keen and sympathetic as well. We had tea in Ginza later, a proper English tea—with cream and fat hot scones, and plum cake—in a nice quiet little upstairs shop; and I told him a little of what I've been feeling about the life out

here—the things that have hurt, and those that grate, or make one sad.

Just in general, of course; but he understood like a flash, and replied in a funny humorous sort of way—laughing away the people and their "*petitesses*" as too insignificant to bother with—yet perfectly comprehending why a woman like me, alone and a visiting stranger, should perforce be bothered by them.

And then we walked home in the dusk, which seems to cast a softening spell over prosaic Tokio; and the Moat in the twilight was more richly green than ever, and the lanterns began to twinkle in the open shops and 'rickshas, as we swung along to the rhythmic "Yai-ho!" of some coolies pushing a load of bamboo up the hill. I felt the most delicious sense of lightness and well-being; and that it was a very satisfactory Tokio, after all.

And now I must scramble into my grey chiffon, for the V.'s are coming to dinner.

Won't it be a jolly party—Vane and Verrek, and Mrs. Fargo and me? I know, dear, *I*—only “me” sounds more important and nicer.

We are going to dine by lantern-light, in the pergola, and I think it ought to be very becoming. And I also think I'll wear a yellow rose in my hair, because—well, just because!

Your ridiculous

NANCY.

P. S.—I was worried about old Carp's saying my stock was going down, but I've forgotten all about it.

P. S. No. 2.—Would you let him paint me? I think it would be rather fun.

Grand Hotel, Yokohama,
October 29, 19—.

Here in Yokohama for a final battle with the costumes. Some look fairly well; others a mess. And in two days the deluge! If it isn't a success, I shall take the first boat for

anywhere; only out of ear-shot of Eloise, who has been helping me along by daily beseeching requests that I shan't "fall down on the whole thing, and disgrace us all three." Ten to one, too, she'll be worried if I should have a triumph. Such are the tipsy scales of the emotions of a diplomat's wife!

Stayed here at the hotel over night with Mrs. Fargo. Yokohama nice and green, after shut-in Tokio; with a sense of freedom and air, from the green hills and view of the sea. But good gracious, how monotonous it gets! The round of shops, and same old streets and people. Will one find all places like this? I remember how thrilled I was to come to Japan, and now—with the first charm of novelty vanished—it's as unromantic and uninteresting as Brinnsville. Is life a question of surroundings after all, I wonder? If places and people too are everywhere disappointingly same, where *is* one to look for happiness?

October thirtieth.

Back at Embassy. E. and R. home from Miyanoshita. Feel that these two separations have deepened the estrangement between Eloise and myself, so suggested, discreetly as I could, that perhaps E. would find it easier to have no responsibility of a guest on her hands, while her Coronation preparations are speeding up; and that I could stay at the Imperial these next two weeks, till time to go to Kyoto with Mrs. Fargo.

E. horrified at the idea of my being at a hotel alone here in Tokio. Shocked to hear that I had even dined at the Imperial, unchaperoned, with Verrek and the other managers of the pageant—who happened all to be men. The Gorrings had spoken of it, said Eloise—in the tone of the heavens falling, and myself unmistakably and irrevocably dropping out.

She was further annoyed because Rodney came into lunch, and admired my new frock, made in Yokohama; and repeated the his-

toric formula sacred to masculine tact:
"Why can't *you* get some like that?"

I went to dress rehearsal, downhearted. It was abominable. Verrek says they always are, and that to-morrow will be a dazzling victory. Wish I could think so; but everybody looked particularly ugly in my costumes, and posed like pokers, and were cross and nasty and hateful about doing things over.

Of course at the last minute they all wanted to change round and be in something else. Mathilde de Regny said she couldn't possibly appear in *Yellow*—it made her look a hag; and Mrs. Gorrington is furious because my songs in the vaudeville take longer than hers; and Diana for a while refused outright to be in the thing at all.

Dear Lady Neff, who has come to every rehearsal, did her best to smoothe things out; but I was so nervous and worn with it all, coming home in the motor with Verrek, I nearly wept. Which promptly made him lose his head, and what I've seen coming for

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several weeks *came*. And I couldn't help it, and didn't want to if I could; and he *is* a dear, and I'm pretty happy to-night, in spite of everything.

Eloise has just been in, before bed, and said she was sorry she was cross; and we made it up, and cried a little—both of us—and kissed each other sort of fiercely, perhaps unconsciously trying to make up for the lost affection we both regret. Aren't women queer? And wouldn't E.'s hair stand on end, if she knew what happened to-night, with Noel? I must get my beauty sleep for to-morrow. Am I really and truly in love?

American Embassy, Tokio,
November 1, 19—.

Dear Bumble:

It's over. And it wasn't a failure, or a stupid farce; but a great big beautiful Success! I'm talking about Lady Neff's Red Cross pageant, you know—it happened yesterday, and I'm still rather dazed and incoherent about it.

The moment I wakened yesterday morning, I felt somehow that it was going to be all right. Goodness knows why, as the dress rehearsal had been a nightmare. But I just felt happy through and through yesterday, and knew that nothing but nice things could happen in it.

In the morning, I had to meet Mr. Verrek about final arrangements, at the British Embassy. The affair was given in their garden; and we found poor Lady Neff with one of those amazing bonnets of hers over one ear, jealously guarding her chrysanthemums, while she directed a small army of excited workmen. Such bedlam! Carpenters hammering, songstresses rehearsing, electricians wiring lanterns, scenery and properties being hauled in piecemeal. But you know: exactly the sort of morning we've had before a Country Club kermess, or the Dramatic Society things. "Chaos and confusion!"—as Mrs. Mercer loved to wail.

Well, it came off certainly a hundred times better than at any rehearsal. In the

first place, a perfectly lovely scene; the garden at night seeming so much bigger, and all the little ponds and bridges and "mountains" (rocks and high trees) softly distinct in the light of a thousand great red lanterns. The stage was in a natural semicircle of ilex trees, which formed a rich black background for the brilliant or delicately pale figures of the performers; and all the "dips" came and sat in the front rows, and there was a big crowd over from Yokohama, and everybody very enthusiastic and appreciative.

But oh Bumble, some of it was too funny—listening and looking on behind the scenes! If you could have beheld poor old Baron Lensky, head cocked coyly, strumming "The Gondoliers" on his mandolin—that has a chronic cold just like him; and Captain Adair, baying "Good-bye Forever" in a thunderous baritone; and plump Parisian Madame Tarascon doing a Greek dance in high heeled gilt slippers! Then Mrs. Goring sang—her own compositions, about

souls, and "purple pastimes," and "hungry, hungry hearts." And Diana recited—very nicely—and Vane and Maria Posada did a clever little sketch of Vane's called "Respectability;" which "took" like wildfire, and put everybody in a good humour for my Spanish song and dance—that was the last of the vaudeville part of the programme.

Then came the famous tableaux! And I needn't have worried about the costumes, for they were beautiful—it all was. Imagine dainty children in flying azure, mauve, pale green, yellow and rose: that was "*Pastel*." And "*Maple-Leaf*:" young girls with loosened hair, and silken shimmering ragged crêpe robes, in all the shades from brown and terra cotta into crimson, ash-red, orange and autumn gold.

"*Oriental*" was perhaps the most gorgeous: all the spectacular types, like Nina Kollavsky and Mr. Verrek and de Roche—half a dozen altogether, grouped between two great black stone panthers (borrowed from Kobeyashi!) and costumed in the mag-

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nificent barbaric shades: purple and vermillion, sapphire blue, emerald, and deep rose; with jewelled head-dresses, wonderfully well imitated.

There were many more: "*Black and White*," "*Watteau*," "*Orchid*," etc., etc.—each prettier than the last, and all enthusiastically applauded. And for the finale, we did the different nations of the Allies, ending with France—which was *me*, in the tri-colour; and I sang the Marseillaise, which always thrills me to the marrow, and of course—since the war—brings down the house.

There was a tumultuous *encore*, and I got them all (or at least the French and the Belgians) to sing the last verse again with me; and even the English and Americans joined in and hummed the tune. And for once etiquette and self-consciousness and all the rest of it were thrown to the four winds; and it was all quite wild and wonderful.

When I came off the stage, Eloise was waiting, to throw her arms round me; and

her "*Oh Nancy!*" spoke volumes of pride and relief. And Lady Neff forgot her British reserve, and kissed me too. "We never could have got on without you, my dear," she declared; while Sir Francis paid compliments excitedly as a boy, and wrung my hand.

We had a festive supper *al fresco*, and I sat between Sir Francis and Mr. Verrek,—who was just quietly beaming over our success, and taking care of me. My lovely Mrs. Fargo was at our table, and the American Minister from Peking, and half a dozen other "high people," as Toshi says. Among them, Belton Thorpe—you know, the famous author-lecturer, who does those travelogue things.

He's a friend of Mrs. Fargo's—a tall, iron-grey man about fifty, ruddy and very well preserved, and very, very grand manner. He has just arrived, by the last boat, with an elderly "Cousin Sara," who has written a *Life of Mrs. Browning*, and wears

curls and caps and little shawls, and tries to look exactly like her invalid heroine.

She patted my cheek, and said, "Radiant child—beautiful; very beautiful." And Mr. Thorpe gave me—and everybody within earshot—a sort of address on "The Power of Personality." He thought it was a conversation, complimenting my dance and the Marseillaise performance; but really he was up on the platform every moment, and I just took the place of the lantern slides.

"Personality," he hailed sonorously, as "the gift of gifts: outshining and outvaluing wealth of gold, noble birth or great position." Which was rather hard on the noble Mrs. Gorrington, who had been making every effort to captivate him.

Isn't it funny, aristocratic disdainfuls who sniff at money and titles and everything else, drop their dignity and run, after a Lion! Even they must have something to bow to, and there's nothing much left, except brains. It is the first time I have seen the wearily superior Aimée and Wilbuh actually taking

trouble. But they're working quite hard over the Thorpes.

Of course Mrs. Gorrington was cross because I didn't flat or get a coughing fit, or stub my toe dancing (as Eloise said all the women would want one to); and Mrs. Chesleigh paid tart compliments about my "clever use of fancy costume and patriotic emotionalism." And Diana said never a word.

When I told her her recitation was splendid, she replied brusquely, "You know it wasn't. Why don't you say what you think?" And turned her back on Mr. Verrek and me, and walked away.

I wish you could know him, Bumble—he's one of the finest, most intelligent and generally attractive men I've ever met. We've come to know one another rather well, over these tableaux.

Of course, after it was all over, and the excitement had died down, there began to be more criticism, less praise. Whisperings among the women about "poor Mr. Verrek's

charming original sketches . . . spoiled by "amateurish costuming"; pitying little asides about my voice, and "unconvincing" portrayal of the Spanish dancer; all of which I heard, as I was intended to. But one can't be bothered with that kitty-cat nonsense. The important matter was that we made fifteen hundred *yen* for the Red Cross—and then Lady Neff's and Verrek's pleasure. They didn't think I'd spoiled things, but were thoroughly delighted and grateful. And Vane and Verrek carried me off home, triumphantly between them, with my arms full of flowers, and Eloise for a very complacent chaperone. And that was the end of the long-anticipated pageant.

But it's a very ragged Day After, Bumble; and I almost wish nice things wouldn't happen, if they leave one so low afterward. It's the Emperor's Birthday, and the Ball to-night, and we dine at the Russian Embassy first—a sort of victorious round-up of the people who were in the tableaux—and

I'm so fagged, I don't know how I'll get through it.

Eloise was scandalised because I balked on the military review this morning; but I wouldn't get out at six A. M. to-day, even to see the Mikado. I've lazed thankfully at home all morning—E. lunched out, so I have the house to myself. And now Mr. Verrek is coming to call, and I must prink a bit. But I'll keep this open till to-morrow, and tell you about the Ball.

Still Another Day After.

And I could write you the usual rosy *résumé*—all flowers and adjectives and beautiful ladies marvellously dressed, and a Court blazing in splendour. But I won't. Because whether you believe it or not, the Emperor's Birthday Ball was neither brilliant nor remarkably entertaining. Only interesting on account of the potpourri of races, classes and costumes; such as could

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never be seen at any other function except, perhaps, the Durbar, in India.

The Ball is given in honour of the Emperor, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs; but the Mikado himself doesn't attend, only some of the Princes and Princesses. And of course this year there's no dancing, on account of the war; and all one did was to walk about and look at people, and eat, and talk to one's friends.

The decorations were amazing: bright red and yellow crêpe paper flowers, and great glary mottoes, and paste-board arches, and the Mikado's picture (a dreadful crayon) framed in artificial red chrysanthemums. And there were stiff satin sofas, all knobs and buttons, round the wall; and the lights in crêpe paper petticoats. Wasn't it strange—all this from the artistic Japanese? But I suppose it's their idea of European decorating; and as such, naïvely pathetic. Imagine us trying to give them a party traditionally *à la Japonaise!*

They were by far the most picturesque

element of the Ball, anyhow—the women gayer than usual in festive colours; and their long, pale, high-bred faces flowering delicately out of the demurely kerchiefed kimono. In no country is the difference in class so striking as in Japan. The people one sees in the street, with their vacuous flat-nosed, almost idiotic faces, might be a separate race from the aristocratic fine-featured and often round-eyed type met at official parties.

Baronne Kisha, the Foreign Minister's wife, looked really lovely in her pale blue European frock and tiara. But the women of the Corps were rather dowdy, and the Eurasians, missionaries, tourists, etc., a hodge-podge of extraordinary "creations" and coiffures. Vane declared his Catholic Archbishop—a stately old man in purple robes and a duck of an emerald ring—was the best-dressed person there. "Excepting Mrs. Graydon, naturally!"

I wore pale rose brocade, that did look rather nice with my hair; and had four Am-

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bassadors—Sir Francis and Count de Regny, and Marchese di Montalto and the faithful Toodles—to take me the tour of the rooms. We had supper in a *salle* to ourselves, the Diplomatic Corps and their guests; very gay, and everybody talked about the pageant, and my “exquisite dance” and “clever costumes”—that is the men did, you understand—and some of the nicer women were generously complimentary too.

Then the Japanese departed, bearing away the paper flowers as souvenirs of this glorious occasion. And we went too—backing away from the Mikado’s picture to the door; and finally reaching home at the decorous hour of eleven.

So now you know something about an Emperor’s Ball (only I left out the princesses and curtseys and things, which were dull and bored everybody.) And I’ll tell you in confidence, the nicest part was the drive home. Mrs. Fargo took Mr. Verrek and me in her motor, for Eloise; and we had such fun talking it all over.

By the way, no further news from Carp. So I hope it's all right, and that stocks have calmed down again. But if you could find out definitely for me, will you cable, please, Bumble? I have a special reason for wanting to know, *soon*.

With love to you and the hounds,

NANCY.

American Embassy, Tokio,
November 4, 19—.

Glory Darling:

I am having an Affair, and it's Mr. Verrek, and I wish you were here—or within a Christian distance—so that I could see you and tell you everything.

You know, at first I didn't like him; that is, I thought he was quiet, and rather stodgy. And then, too, one got tired of his heirship and Lord Gresham and all that, crammed down one's throat by Eloise. But once I'd seen his pictures—which E. never thought to mention—I forgot everything else. And of course then *he* woke up, when he saw my ad-

miration of his perfectly splendid work; and we began to be friends.

Then came the tableaux, which mean daily consulting together, and a good deal of casual intimacy, with parties and dinners and things strewn along at the same time; and finally, a week ago to-day, a shopping tour—which ended in a Ginza tea place, and the first hint of dangerous sentiment.

It was probably my fault. I was feeling blue as indigo, over a lot of ridiculous gossip that had been going the rounds of the Tokio tabbies; and I let him see it, and he was a little too sympathetic and comforting—there was nobody in the tea-shop, upstairs—well, so that was the beginning.

The climax came pretty quickly; the night of that ghastly dress rehearsal, when he brought me home in his limousine, and I was so nervous and upset, after the way every one had behaved, I couldn't speak without my voice trembling, and once I nearly cried.

That was too much for Verrek, and he took me in his arms, and kissed me about a

thousand times; and said the sweetest things. And I let him, and thought it was beautiful.

Only we got home unnecessarily soon, and had to break off in the middle. Suppose Diana had looked out of her window, and beheld me in the arms of the Honourable Noel! He is such a dear, Glory, and I *am* fond of him, and I hope so much we may—but I'm getting ahead of my story.

We hadn't a chance to talk, till after the pageant—which, as I wrote you, was very successful; and Noel was so pleased, and as Vane declared, "insufferably proud" of me. I came home that night between those two; but Noel managed to get my hand under the robe, and squeezed it nearly off, and he kept whispering the most disconcerting things, low in my ear. Which was an excuse for kissing it, and no one—in the dark—any the wiser.

The next day, he came at three; and we had the house to ourselves, and sat on the smallest sofa, hand in hand, for our first real talk. As Noel said, we fell in love first, and

got acquainted afterward—that is, for the personal things. We didn't even know middle names, or what each other liked to eat. So Noel said he had better begin and tell me about himself.

He said he'd been not popular in school, or at the 'Varsity, always wanting to draw instead of doing games—though he was good enough at them; and he grew terribly shy and thought nobody liked him, and was perfectly delighted with a smile from any one. And then when he came of age, he suddenly found the whole world smiling at him—for his name, but he was too unsophisticated to know—and he was dazzled and young and inexperienced; and for a while got in with “the wrong sort,” and was embroiled in several “too conspicuous sensations,” and had one or two “nasty shaves.”

Every now and then, though he would rush off to Paris and paint; and then he forgot himself and the wretched title that would one day land him, “a sedate ornament of an emasculated House of Lords”; and

remembered only the possessing joy of his natural work that he loved. But his father and sister and the usual lot of managing relatives, succeeded in convincing him that art was merely frittering, and that he owed it to his country to enter diplomacy, and make a career "that would show for something." He had only taken the *Premier Prix* at the Salon that year, and a few other things!

So he entered the service, and went to Vienna for his first post, and then to Washington, and now out here. And it has been not half bad, seeing the different countries and types, with a chance to paint them now and then, on the side. But lately his family have taken him in hand again, this time with a view to "getting him properly settled"; as apparently it is unheard of that a peer-to-be should arrive at the ripe age of thirty-one, still unmarried.

"But the thought of it bored me awfully," said Noel, naïvely. "So I put them off as long as ever I could. And meanwhile I did

flirt rather a lot, darling, but it was all just *frou-frou*—nothing serious, you know; so don't be vexed at any histories the dowagers and people may pass on to you.

"I did have one rather more dangerous affair last year out here; the woman turned out to be a rotter, and tried blackmail and goodness knows what all, over some silly letters. And after that, Gertrude descended, to look after me"—he rolled his eyes with such a funny mock-tragedy air—"and with solemn instructions from home, to get me safely married as soon as possible, to some nice bread and butter, with money between."

So that, he went on to explain tactfully, was why I'd seen him playing forced attention to certain people he otherwise never would have bothered with (meaning Diana, naturally). "Because of course I *am* poor, darling, and not altogether free to choose my own life, as I should if I hadn't to inherit. I owe it to my people to make a proper marriage—which doesn't necessarily mean a great fortune, but enough to get on

with decently, and to keep up the name. Thank heaven, you have that little of your own—which is all we'll need. So we can forget the whole beastly business of money, and be as happy as larks, can't we, dear?"

At which critical moment, two things occurred: Noel kissed me so hard I couldn't breathe, much less speak; and some elderly tourists burst in upon us, to call on Eloise.

Which meant hasty regrouping, hair smoothing, sedate separating to distant chairs; and then the usual tourist topics: tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and "isn't Japan-a-beautiful-country?"—Noel squirming, protestingly, every minute, and I praying for Eloise.

She didn't come, and they didn't go, till after six—when it was time for Noel to run too, and for all of us to dress for dinner and the Ball. So I hadn't a chance to say a word then; and since, when we've been alone together, I've found it a very difficult subject to bring up: money, I mean.

Noel evidently takes it for granted—from

little hints Eloise let fall when I first came—that I am not rich, but “comfortable”; and I would be, from the English point of view, if I were sure of my usual income. But as I wrote you about that tiresome dividend, Carp has left me very uncertain about the future. I won’t know definitely what I can count on, till I hear Bumble’s report.

I’ve asked him to cable; but meanwhile I feel guilty and deceitful, when I see Noel innocently happy in what he thinks is our settled future. He’s very much in love, and I think he would marry me, even if I should find I’ll have only a very little to go on with. But I could never stand it to feel I was being a drag on him, and hampering instead of helping his career. For I understand, from what he’s told me, how different his position is from that of an American man, with no hereditary responsibilities to consider.

And still, I care for him, truly; and it would be terribly hard to give him up!

For the present I’m having to temporise, about plans, and telling Lady Gertrude and

everything; till I get my cable from Bumble. I had arranged to go to the Coronation at Kyoto with Mrs. Fargo and possibly on to Corea and Peking (only now I may not be able to afford it); while Noel isn't going to Kyoto, but stays here in charge of his Embassy, while Sir Francis and the First are away.

Of course he doesn't want me to miss the Coronation, and the understanding now is, that I shall see that, and go to China if I like—"But not for more than a fortnight, mind!"—and then come back here, and "announce it." But oh, Glory, will that ever be? My heart sinks, every time I think of it.

Lady Gertrude has no use for Americans, unless they're covered up with dollar signs; and she would make it hard for me—the rest of his people too, perhaps. But I would so like to rescue Noel from their cut and dried conventionalism, and give him a chance to develope his creative individual self, and be something more than a mere titled automaton.

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He is such a boy at heart, and has the sweetest ways. He'll dash into the room, seize both one's hands, and cry: "Darling, here I am! Are you glad?" And he's always bringing little presents, and foolish trinkets he had in school, and funny old pictures of himself—with curls, or a long-legged youth in an Eton jacket. And beneath all his British reserve and outward indifference, there's the most sensitive tenderness and consideration.

He can be rather terrible though, when roused. A royal temper, that I've seen him use to flay. And he shares that English attitude of The Male-for-whom-the-world-was-made; and has an eye for female pulchritude, that does not escape me, by any means.

Whatever he implies about being "forced" to pay attention to Diana, I've seen him look at her sometimes with—well, as he said ingenuously, "*she has magnificent shoulders.*"

Oh, he isn't impeccable, Glow, and I've no illusions about his being ideal or a Hero—

I'd be bored to death with him if he were. There are times when he rather frightens me with his very elemental ardour; and other times, when I feel a sudden cold stolidity in him—a sort of atavistic *hauteur*—that makes one aware of a spiritual aloofness, practically impenetrable.

It's the caste consciousness; and I believe at a pinch, he and every mother's son of them would drop all personal emotion, and act solely on tradition and the code. But this is just another side of that aristocratic sense of responsibility I so much admire. Noel works like a slave in the Chancery—he *is* so fine, and oh, I do like men *soigné*, and with that perfect assurance and ease!

I'm seeing him every day, now. We have the excuse of a portrait of me he's begun, and is doing in Rodney's unused "study": a most convenient room, at a distant part of the house! And at dinners, we are always put next, and chairs pointedly left vacant for us; and a general highly conscious atmosphere of "my young man" prevails.

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I've made no explanations whatever to Eloise, because in my own present uncertainty, there's nothing I can say. She and Rodney are constrained (on account of the Chesleights); though I think not altogether displeased at the thought of their guest making what would be called a brilliant match, from their threshold, as it were.

Oh, how glad I'll be when all the fencing is over, and one can come out openly, and say we're engaged, and going to be married. Will that actually arrive? I try to think so, in spite of those sinking feelings round the heart, when I remember that miserable Carp's disturbing letter.

Money or no money, I long, woman-like, to redeem Noel the individual and creator, from the hide-bound Eldest Son. Though I should like being Lady Gresham, as well as anybody!

Good-bye, my dear. It's done me good to "blow off" to you, even at ten thousand miles. And I so hope things are going well with you, and that you will decide soon to

escape from that office prison, and find freedom and love and your proper place in the world, with the next nicest man in it—since I have Noel!

Your Nancy, who is happy anyhow.

P. S.—Don't say a word to Bumble. You're so fond of that dear old B., I know you want to tell him everything. But I'd rather write him myself, when things are more settled. By the bye, I think it's the moment to remind you of our girlhood dream—that you and I should have a double wedding!

November fifth.

Engagements piling up, this last week before the Coronation. E. said to-day, "Well, I think there's been enough entertaining even to satisfy a spoiled princess!" Since the pageant it's been one round of dinners and garden parties, topping off with an affair de luxe at Adair's yesterday evening.

He is very rich, and does himself thoroughly *en sybarite*: perfumed lamps, gold

plate, etc., etc. I went in with Noel, and would have had a beautiful time, but Eloise took this strange occasion to behave in the most extraordinary manner to me: a sort of continuous fault-finding at top-voice before every one—telling me what to do, and what not to do, whom to talk to, where to sit (in the drawing-room later on); besides the usual “Queen Nancy” compliments to excuse her obvious rudeness.

Even Lady Neff raised her eye-brows (at this bizarre exhibition of a hostess), and laughingly reminded me of her oft-repeated invitation to come and stay at the British Embassy—“if they don’t do well by you at your own.”

And Noel was furious. He drove me home alone, in spite of Eloise; and all the way kept urging me to announce our engagement, so that he’d have the right to protect me from such “outrageous bobbbers.” Then he half suffocated me with kisses. He is a dear; but I wish he weren’t quite so

keen for touching one, every minute we're alone together. James was not at all like that. I suppose one has to get used to different sorts of husbands.

Anyhow, with Noel so madly in love with me, what do I care what Eloise says or does? Noel thinks, since the pageant, she is personally jealous; but that's too silly. . . .

She came in, at that very moment, to speak about him. *Are we engaged?* "People are talking"; and she, as my chaperon, feels she should know something definite. "Of course Verrek can't marry without money"—shall I forget that phrase to my dying day? And Lady Gertrude, who knows nothing at all about me, came to her for information, "since she saw how things were going."

I said I thought Verrek sufficiently adult to manage his own affairs—one might think I went out and sandbagged him, poor helpless creature! And naturally I couldn't give her any satisfaction about the wretched money, if I'd wanted to.

She waited for a while, then exclaimed: "Oh, very well—if you insist on being stubborn and disagreeable! I want to help you, Nancy, as I told you when you first came; but you're so secretive, and resent any kindly interest in your affairs—why you could have had de Roche or Brent or half a dozen others, if you'd only listened to me. Why not be frank, and let us work together?"

I said, "Because I'm not 'working,' Eloise. I am simply being myself."

And I tried to make her see—my point of view, and indirectly what I'd felt about her "tactics" with Diana and me, and all that unnecessary wire-pulling in general; tried to bring her to our old frank understanding. But she was only offended, and flounced out, saying I was unappreciative and impossible.

Perhaps I am. But I do appreciate Eloise's kindness in having me here, and so making it possible for me to see and take part in things I otherwise never would have touched. And I surely would value above

all things, at this uncertain upset time, a truly friendly interest, and some good sound loving advice, instead of sharp-eyed worldly calculation.

Think I'll go over to Mrs. Fargo's. This bout with E. has disturbed me awfully.

Later.

Home again, after lunch at the Neffs, in honour of Mr. Thorpe, the travelogue celebrity. Every one is giving him parties this week—even the Crown Prince. I've met him several times since the pageant, where he was so *empressé*, and we get on splendidly.

At Mrs. Fargo's an hour before lunch. Made a clean breast of everything, and asked her honest advice about Noel. Told her, as Vane said, how with their tiny salaries in diplomacy, they simply daren't marry, unless the girl has an independent fortune of her own; and how delicately Noel had disposed of the question (and my compara-

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tive poverty) by being thankful I had the little we'd need, and with that dropping the subject. And I told her about Carp's letter of course, and how I realise the practical side of it, but find it difficult to speak of, with Noel.

The other day when we were alone, I did try to broach things a little. He was ranting happily about my marvellous gifts and attractions; and I put in, "But Noel dear, you know I'm not rich. Shall I really be able to help you?"

And he said—I remember the very words: "No woman I've ever seen could help me so much. Why Nancy, you have the most precious riches: a keen mind, and a beautiful gay tender spirit, and a simply ripping 'presence' always. Sir Francis and Dr. Hu and all the men out here say you're the most intelligent woman they ever talked to; and the loveliest, and most alluring and—" he finished in a storm of worshipping kisses.

There seemed no doubt in *his* mind that I was all he wanted. But Mrs. Fargo says

I must remember he spoke at the height of loverlike ardour, and always conscious in the back of his head that I had—as he thought—the necessary “little.” She frankly told me we should be perfectly miserable without it; as love is an exquisitely frail thing, and cannot stand much buffeting with economics.

Whatever Noel’s talents, she went on, he was born to the traditions and responsibilities of Lord Gresham. That is his atmosphere, and the rest of his life, including marriage, must contribute positively to it, or else become irksome and a failure.

“As a young bachelor, he can manage comfortably on very little; but once married, with an establishment and a family to bring up, it will be quite a different matter. Then he’ll be in the limelight, with his hosts of relatives and friends and all the rest of the world scrutinising his every move; and the woman who makes things difficult instead of easier for him, won’t keep his love for long. So if you take my advice, my dear, you’ll

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never marry Noel Verrek if you lose your money."

That's what Mrs. Fargo said, and I'm sure it's sound. But shall I be able to follow it, if the test comes? Noel was at the Neffs' luncheon, and so despairingly attractive. I kept meeting his adoring blue eyes, and wondering how I could ever let him go.

Life is harassing. But perhaps—I really think so—everything will be all right; and Carp will write to say the scare has blown over, and we can be married and forget the whole question.

November seventh.

Sewed for E. on some belated Coronation frocks, instead of playing tennis with Noel. Very depressed, till Mr. Thorpe came to call, and quite cheered me up. His card looks like a wedding-invitation—everything on from Legion d'Honneur to the Sons of the Macabees! But, as Vane says, he has a beautiful "hand-kissing manner," and thank heaven he can talk! Instead of the eternal

naughty stories and diplomatic patter: Coronation, *nubi*, yesterday's earthquake, Nina K.'s ear-rings (she has a new pair every week), and a *rechauffée* of the latest intrigues—which constitutes the conversation of the usual official call! How sick I am of people falling in love with other people's wives—and of watching men drink whiskey and soda. They blame both on the climate.

But with Mr. Thorpe one had a thoroughly interesting talk—mostly about his experiences to be sure, and his views on the East and the world in general. In the midst of which Mesdames Tarascon and di Montalto arrived, and seeing us getting on so well, attacked me playfully on my “masculine gift of discussion,” and the dire danger of being heralded as a *femme eminente*. In this society it is considered positively ill-bred to show any brains. You must only talk scandal and flirt.

After Mr. Thorpe left, the two ladies proceeded tooth and nail to the business they came for: prying into my affair with Noel.

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They were "*so* fond of me, and naturally as an inexperienced American I couldn't know all the ins and outs of diplomatic gossip in connection with an attempted alliance with a great family," etc., etc.

Perhaps they'll see things differently when I come back and announce my engagement to N——

Oh, the mail is here! Yes, and a letter from Carp!

He thinks everything is gone. Didn't sell, as I told him, hoping to recoup; and now—I could murder him, calmly and coolly and without a pang.

Had to go to the theatre with E. and R.—a party of Gideon Brent's. Noel was there. No idea what the plays were, except a Coronation procession of geisha at the end. And we rode down in ricksha afterward, to see the Coronation arch and lights. It was hideously festive—all the illuminations in front of the dark Moat.

Noel had his ricksha brought close to mine,

and whispered, "Darling, what is it? Are you ill?"

All I could do was to shake my head. Shall tell him to-morrow. Even on the millionth chance of things coming out yet, can't stand this suspense any longer. Oh Aunt Judy, Glory—*somebody*—if only you were here!

November ninth.

Many cannon at seven announced the departure of the Emperor for Kyoto. Awful time getting Eloise off later. Three tailors, Mrs. Fargo, Toshi and I sewed until the last minute; when we finally bundled E. and R. and a last trunk full of unfinished frocks into the motor, for the station.

Eloise worn to a thread. Had hysterics at lunch, and went off dazed; hardly seeming to realise it was good-bye—as I shan't be coming back here after the Coronation.

No chance to see Noel to-day. Spending the night with Mrs. Fargo with whom I leave for Kyoto on Friday.

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She had a geisha party for the Thorpes and some friends of Vane's, the Lahns, from Peking. Same old thing: lobster and green tea, and the geisha, when they weren't dancing, sat between us and giggled and fed us with chop-sticks, and tried on our rings, and said "ver' nize" and "pritty." The sensation of the evening was Watanabe's appearing with his flute, and yards of Japanese music, that looks like a cubist laundry list. Assisted by Madame Peach-tree on the *koto*, he performed at length; while de Roche sang ridiculously, and Vane and his Peking friends tried to be tiresomely riotous with the geisha—who understood not a word of their silly jokes.

Is there anything more stupidly monotonous than the Rowdy Party, the world round? A cabaret in America, or a geisha supper in Tokio—it's all one. I wanted to cry my eyes out, the entire evening; and to be in Noel's arms, and have him comfort me.

What will he say when I tell him to-mor-

row? I have a feeling of apprehension, deeper than concern about losing the money.

33 Akasaka-cho,
November 10, 19—.

Dear Noel:

Please do not come to-night, as you suggested. Since our parting this afternoon, I have decided it can do no good for us to see each other again. You said something about talking things over—because you were bewildered and miserable, and didn't know just what to do. But let me know for both of us.

I understand your position entirely; and as I told you this afternoon, it would make me most unhappy to come to you under conditions such as I find them to be. Indeed, as you yourself hinted, it would be impossible, for us both.

Good-bye, Noel. I wish you all the benefits the world can give—in other words, all that you want or think you need, for a successful life.

NANCY.

En Route To Kyoto.
November eleventh.

We are in the train—Mrs. Fargo and I. Left Tokio an hour ago—sick at heart over everything. If only Noel had risen to it all—I wouldn't have married him, anyhow; but if he had let me be the one to say it was impossible, and to protect the interests of himself and his precious name. . . .

But he didn't. He was very distressed and upset, and sorry for me—yes; but, as I'd feared instinctively all along, at the critical moment, Noel failed. He didn't come up to scratch.

That's what I'd dreaded, more than losing him; I so wanted him to prove a depth of personal feeling and responsibility, greater than mere trained adherence to the code. And when he didn't, it hurt—all my dubious anticipations notwithstanding.

Well, it's over; and thank heaven, I hadn't to say good-bye to him. A wretched, conscience-stricken sort of note came in answer to mine last night—he loved me, and would

always remember, but he was "in a trap," inherited duties, obligations, etc. And he begged me not to think too hardly of him—with my "quick perception and sympathy," I would understand. Oh, I do, Noel—only too well!

Somehow finished packing, and got away from the Embassy and Tokio. How different it was, leaving Eloise's, from the sunshiny cordial day I came—when I wrote Bumble enthusiastically about the charming, hospitable people, and everything was *couleur de rose*. Crept out, heartsick and solitary, from the deserted house last night, in a cold, dribbly, hostile rain. Almost hated the Embassy now, looking back at it over my shoulder, and remembering all that's happened there, these kaleidoscopic two months.

Why did I ever come to Japan? What in the world have I found here, but unhappiness and insincerity and self-seeking? I thought I was leaving all that behind in Brinnsville; that petty hypocrisies and concentration on little things—personal in-

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terests, jealousy, "getting ahead"—were confined to the restricted atmosphere of the American small town. But they're part and parcel of this international official society—supposedly the most brilliant that exists—and in which I thought to find inspiration, charm, originality, and big ideas!

Nancy, my dear, it's time you woke up to the world as it is; and recognised that society with its shallow standards, human character with its innate tendency to selfish calculation, false pride and snobbism, is the same everywhere.

Look at the parties—the musicale, the bazaar, the ball, the rowdy lark; and the gossip of the men's clubs, the women's calls. Where's the difference, between provincial Brinnsville and official Tokio? And the people—haven't I realised again and again, the same vain and dull and important puffed-up types?

Congenial friends are as rare here as at home. Of the hundreds of people I've met, these two months among the Court and

diplomatic sets of Tokio, I could count on one hand those I care to meet again. Even the few who have come nearest—what do they count, really, in my life?

Eloise, who at first seemed such a marvel of kindness and tact, turns out to be a self-centred, rather inept politician; tending her place as anxiously as ever Lily Moore tended a potential presidency of a Woman's Club.

Vane, with all his attractions, is a masterpiece of futility; squandering time, energy, ability, in mere careless criticism—malice masked as wit.

And Noel: whose passionate appreciation of my spiritual riches, was so quickly snuffed by the disappearance of the pounds, shillings, and pence, which he finds more essential after all. He'll soon forget; and eventually include our brief episode with his other "frou-frou." His world takes love lightly—and no wonder; considering its average "affair," and definition of the term in general.

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Oh, how dreary and sordid and utterly futile it all seems. "The glamour of the East!" "The charm of a unique and picturesque Court," "association with brilliant people" (like Diana and the Gorrings and Madame Tarascon!): all the romantic fol de rol one ingenuously believed in, and that turns out to be the same old disheartening, stupid world—with a little gilt and gold lace tacked on gaudily.

I *am* in a blue funk! Better stop this and read my letters. So upset, I forgot the mail came as we were leaving. I'll see what Bumble has to say.

12 Cedar Street,
Brinnsville,
October 28, 19—.

Dear Nancy:

You're right—as your letter from Nikko suggests: It's all one: Brinnsville or Buckingham Palace. That is, there's the same fun to be had out of work and people and the wonders of the world, everywhere.

Which is why I'm content to stay where

I am. A man's work, wherever he is, is simply a focus for serving; his personality the tool of the greater Self that knows no personal limitation.

That's what you, like all the rest of us, are really seeking, Nancy: not the world outside, but the Life within—yourself and all things. And you instinctively turn to those whose present development most nearly approximates your own. Go ahead and laugh at my textbook stuffiness! All the same it's true: The combination of ideas that is I, loves best the combination that most nearly tallies with its own; dislikes, on the other hand, those ideas it instinctively knows or has proved to be false—such as your friend Eloise's insincerity, or Diana's brash temper which you have outgrown.

Laugh or scoff or doubt as we like, every man Jack of us hourly reaches out to the revealed intelligence, or God, in every other one of us; is sad and unhappy at the evil, which is ignorance.

What drew you to the attractive Vane but

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your own spontaneity and wit, quick mind and cleverness? Just as you were drawn to your own loyalty and devotion in Eloise, your own clear analysis and keen mind, in Mrs. Fargo. And in the Englishman, Verrek, to your own loved naturalness, simplicity, ease in the world; plus the rarer genius of the artist-creator—which, don't forget, is profoundly a part of yourself.

The things that sadden you in these people and in every one, are mere temporary veils of ignorance, obscuring their real spirit, to be fully discovered in time. Vane will awake to the responsibility attached to his versatile endowment; Verrek in his obedience to tradition, will learn the higher obedience to his individual convictions; Mrs. Fargo's unsatisfied spirit will go further than the social world—that has taught her all it has to teach—and will find peace in a wider identification with the universe.

Do you know, your people who interest me most, are Diana and Eloise. Surprised? It's because they *are* obvious, and crude, and

"show through," like the stumbling children at life that they seem.

Diana's rudeness is mostly self-consciousness, I believe—and her apparent dislike of you (also Mrs. Gorrington's and the other women's) impatience at the unexpressed within herself; really, attraction and desire to understand how you, without great fortune or jewels, or many frocks, or even much effort, gain and hold the people she wants. Wait till she really loves!

As for Eloise, she is working at what is her idea of diplomacy: trying to employ methods of intricate manoeuvre not really her own; and her transparency, which is actually *failure* to be insincere, has a certain negative nobility.

Isn't it a blessing, anyhow, that we needn't carry the deficiencies of our friends on our sometimes restive shoulders; but can know, like the patient priest in Tagore, that sooner or later, "they must come, one and all," and ourselves, into the understanding that will certainly be heaven.

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Meanwhile, this world seems a very nice place. Though Glory and I think it would be nicer if you weren't so far away. When are you coming home?

I'm A-1, though a bit bothered by these pesky strikes—which are still on, and the town more and more upset, every day. Carpenters and joiners “went out” to-day—that makes nearly every union in the place, and sympathetic disturbances in several neighbouring towns. We still have the militia, much poverty, and fifteen thousand men out of work, hanging around the streets, looking for trouble.

Something has to be done. I'm going to Chicago to-morrow, to see the Labour Federation Secretary—possibly also to New York, in which case I shall look in on Glory. She's all you say, and more; and I miss her like the dickens, since she's off on her imposing new job. Hope the splendours of being comptroller of a metropolitan copper company, won't win her quite away from Brinnsville.

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Good luck! Have a good time, but come home as soon as you can. Yes, indeed, I'm all right—happy as a lark—you're not to worry an instant about me. Except to know that the dogs and I'll be thundering glad to see you, whenever you get tired of kings and cabbages, and feel like a great tramp in our wood once more.

Ever the same,

BUMBLE.

Dear old Bumble! In the clouds, philosophising, as always. He would never get on in the great world, with his quixotic fancies about all people being so fine—Eloise's "nobility," and Diana's concealed attraction for me! And Mrs. Fargo "going further"—how can she? I don't understand all that about truth and the life within and identification and everything; it sounds just a lot of words.

Still, Bumble has something that enables him to dissect even things he hasn't seen, strangely accurately at times. And *he's* a

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real man—not a parcel of beautiful manners stamped with a coronet instead of character. If last August when he asked me—but that's all over and done with. He and Glow are going on splendidly, and I've encouraged it from the beginning, and it'll be the solution of all Glory's problems—she'll make him a much better wife anyhow. So I'm very happy about them—if I'm happy about anything just now.

Nonsense! I shall stop mooning and get some fun out of life myself. Noel isn't the only man in the world; and the Coronation ought to compensate for a good deal.

Miyako Hotel, Kyoto,
November 19, 19—.

Dearest Glory:

I arrived here a week ago, for the Coronation, you know, with Mrs. Fargo. Eloise and Rodney, with the other diplomats, are guests of the Emperor at the Kyoto Hotel; but we stay with the tourists and newspaper people and Japanese aristocracy, at this lovely hotel on the hill.

It was an awful journey from Tokio. I may as well tell you—I broke with Noel. The money is gone, and I told him, and he didn't take it very well. My idol had the usual kind of feet. So that's finished, and no use talking about it. But that dismal day after, twelve long hours in the train, seemed interminable.

We reached Kyoto (the old capital of Japan, you remember) at half past seven at night; and were thrilled by the brilliant city, entirely *en gala*. Lovely great amber lanterns lining the streets, and a carnival throng of people in masks and gay kimonos, bearing bobbing red lanterns and shouting "*Banzai!*" like one big voice. The paper *shoji* were exquisite, with their soft mother o' pearl radiance; and the watercourses and open balconies made it fascinating. Everything spick and span, and wreathed in flowers, for the great festival.

At the hotel we found a potpourri of friends: Mr. Thorpe (you remember, the good-looking travelogue man), and his

"Cousin Sara," and the Peking Minister, Mr. Grier, and Gideon Brent and a lot of men. Also Diana, caressingly chaperoned by Noel's sister. *There* is his money, of course. His attentions won't be so "forced," I fancy, now that I'm conveniently disposed of!

I know I'm peevish, dear, but I've been ready to weep, from fatigue and—well—lost faith, I suppose. The day after we arrived, I unburdened my soul to Deborah Fargo—about Noel and the money worry (which has assumed a really serious aspect), and my general disillusion with the world.

We were having tea in Deborah's sitting-room, comfortably tête-à-tête over the fire; and she sat for a moment thoughtfully, balancing her cup between those fine long hands, before she answered me.

Finally she said, "Nancy, I think you're suffering because you're still young enough to be looking for the ideal—in men and circumstances. You'll be a great deal happier if you'll learn to take life as you find it, and

not expect too much. The best thing you can do, is to follow Verrek's sound worldly example, and make a good marriage, yourself."

"Me—marry, *now*?" I exclaimed, indignantly. (Thought I'd had had enough of romance and said so.)

Deborah agreed, but added calmly that marriage and romance were not necessarily synonymous. "Marry the life you like," she quoted from a book we'd been reading, "for, after a very short time, the man doesn't matter."

"That's the solution for you, my dear. You love beautiful things, travel, variety—all of which cost money. And you shrink from the criticism and jealousy that will always be showered on you, as long as you're alone. A young and attractive woman, forever battling with the world anyhow, needs the armour of a protective man to shield her.

"Why not take Brent (who's been proposing Mondays, Wednesdays and alternate

Fridays, as I told you). No, he's too *crâ*. Thorpe, then—the very one! A distinguished and clever man, as well as a millionaire and world-wide celebrity. You know, they say he's pals with every king in Europe—and he's already quite mad about you. Ever since the pageant he's talked to me about you—'what originality, what loveliness, what allure! But my dear Deborah, she is exquisite, *tout à fait exquisite!*'

"You know how he adores being French," Deborah added; "a bit pompous and self-satisfied perhaps, but I've known him for years, and he leads the most interesting sort of existence, with the most amusing and worth while people everywhere. That artistic life is just the place for you to shine, Nancy—much more scope than in the conventional society which courts it."

I said, "How funny it all is: money fawning on position, position on birth, birth on artistic talent——"

"But all bow to personality," put in Deborah. "That is, individual distinction and

personal charm—which you have to a rare degree.”

And she urged me to get a new view of my own aims and attributes, and to plan out my life—not as a sentimental school-girl, but an experienced woman now—from the practical basis of personal security and satisfaction. “You must establish yourself,” she said earnestly, “in a position where you can afford to be indifferent to the world. Beat it at its own game, and then it will be your slave instead of your master.”

I was touched by her taking such an interest, Glory, and her argument sounds wise. Certainly I can’t go far on morbid wailing and a vanishing letter of credit. When this is gone, I shall have only about fifteen hundred a year, and the house in Brinnsville. I might do worse than marry a man of means and reputation, who could give one the freedom and protection which—as Deborah rightly says—a woman needs above all things.

From my brief but illuminating experi-

ence, I know life *is* a fight, with "beat or be beaten" for the war-cry. I confess I shouldn't at all mind being quits with this world that has hurt me; and if, as they all declare, I have that mysteriously potent "personality," why not put it to some practical use? I can offer that much on my side—my intelligence and personal gifts, such as they are—in exchange for the secure position and permanent prestige which I see now in this world is absolutely necessary. I'm oh so tired of playing the wandering lone woman, for every one to peck at!

And Thorpe is only fifty, and very fit and well set-up. Tall, you know, and iron-grey hair (a little thinnish, but his profile's excellent); and his eyes—a bit near together—are quite a nice brown. It wouldn't be at all hard to like him—very stimulating to talk to, after the nonchalant chatter of the "dips"; though he does rather "travelogue" every minute, even ordering bacon and eggs as though the whole world were regarding him, up on the platform.

But, as Deborah says, he knows all the Best People (!) in the East as well as Europe and America; heaps of parties have been given for him here and in Tokio; he had an Audience, and a dinner by one of the royal Princes, and is being allowed the rare privilege of attending all the Coronation ceremonies—the only foreigner outside the Diplomatic Corps. Of course he will write and lecture about it all over the world. What an interesting life!

I half promised Deborah to “go in” for him seriously. Clever friend that she is, she’s planned for us to see a great deal of the Thorpes here, and in Peking later on; and the great Belton does seem to like me. Mrs. Belton Thorpe! What would you think of that, Glory?

November 21st.

It seems that I’m never to get a chance to finish this, my dear—the days are so full, and the *affaire Thorpe* so absorbing! We are constantly together, thanks to Deborah’s

astute arrangements—I wish you could see her tuck “Cousin Sara” under her arm, and march her off ahead to inspect some old temple; while Thorpe and I are left to ourselves.

He is spending every minute he can with us, and is always arranging to include Deborah and me in all the Coronation things where he can possibly squeeze us in. Of course, as “non-combatants” I started to say, we are only on the outskirts—a few public processions, balls at the hotel, and sight-seeing in the temples or *cloisonné* factories, constitute our mild Coronation round. But Mr. Thorpe got us cards for the Imperial Garden Party, and took us to the famous Cherry Dance, and to Nara—a beautiful old town about thirty miles from here—and several other charming things.

The Cherry Dance was very lovely—about two hundred of the most celebrated geisha in Japan, for this special Coronation performance. The musicians (seated facing each other along the two sides of the theatre) were a striking study in black and white:

fifty Japanese demoiselles, with their black hair and pretty, pale faces, black kimonos, white *obis*, and black and ivory *samisens*—the instruments they play on—while the dancers, in a variety of fantastic costumes, performed in the centre.

Such colour! The scenery constantly changes and revolves with each new figure; the dance is a succession of exquisite pictures, each symbolic of some bit of Japanese life—"The Planting of the Rice," "The Cherry Festival," etc.—and I kept thinking what a furore it would make in Paris or America. The Russian ballet would be nowhere!

Then, as I said, Mr. Thorpe had seats in the grandstand for us for the religious procession—a sort of historical survey of the different religious periods in Japan—with which the Emperor entertained his guests. Parts of it were splendid: solemn coffee-coloured old priests, in beautiful armour and gorgeous brocade robes; and one very decorative *cortège* of thirty men in magnificent

gold robes, bearing a black and gold treasure chest—or it may have been a catafalque. You never can tell, in this country where people are buried neatly tucked up in the garden urn.

The rest was stupid, except seeing the diplomats go by, in their Coronation carriages of state—with very dressy horses and outriders, and a great cracking of whips. One couldn't forbear a gentle grin at the characteristic attitudes, as they flourished past: the Neffs humourously bored, Sir Francis sending us one of his Louis Quatorze bows, Lady N. a resigned grimace. Then the Chesleights, shrieking of maids and valets and bulging jewel-cases; closely followed by Eloise and Rodney—anxiously amiable, in a duet of conciliatory smiles. And the Kollavskys, theatric, insolent; and the Tarascons, like a pair of plump partridges, with their lurid plumage and malicious little eyes.

Perhaps I'm in a not very appreciative mood, just now, towards the silver-gilt aris-

tocracy in general. Down at the Kyoto Hotel yesterday, they were more than usually "impressive." Deborah and I went to pay some calls, and incidentally helped Eloïse into her dress for the grandest Coronation banquet—which was last night. I've never seen her look lovelier—so tiny and *élégante*, floating down to the carriage in her fragile tulle and silver; like a fairy with blue eyes and black hair.

A lot of other people were in the drawing-room, waiting for their carriages too. Mrs. Chesleigh, like the Queen of Sheba arrayed for the great moment, had scarcely a glance for any one.

Mr. Chesleigh and the other men greeted one with the usual deference and charming speeches—which I must say, wear a little thin as time goes on; while the women did their best to patronise, and make one feel as "out of it" as possible.

Nina Kollavsky condoled with me over having at last my "chain of triumphs" broken, by being unable to participate in

the marvels of the Coronation. Maria Posada took care to inform me that Diana is returning to Tokio to-morrow, to stay with Lady Gertrude till her mother comes. And even Eloise whispered on the side that she was so glad I'd come to see the fitness of things, and turned to Mr. Thorpe—"a brilliant man, with so much money!"

Adding, "Oh, of course you never want a word about your affairs; but I'm not blind, and I hear what goes on, besides. Some day you'll realise my true affection."

Perhaps I shall. Meanwhile, Glory dear, I'm sick and tired of the prying curiosity and condescension of the whole lot of them. They'd take a very different attitude if I were married to Belton Thorpe.

To-day—my birthday—he took us in a motor to Nara, the most enchanting spot. Groves of those giant cryptomeria trees and brilliant maples, tame deer running about everywhere, and long avenues of old stone lanterns, leading up and up to the ancient brown temples. We met Señor Posada, and

Baron Lensky and Adair, taking a grateful day off from Coronating; and Mr. Thorpe asked them to lunch with us, explaining that it was my birthday party; and they seemed delighted.

Posada said plaintively, when we asked about things, "But madame, we are worn out—dead! Endless ceremonies, interminable banquets, standing by the hour—for what we have no idea. But the poor feet—*oh, la, la!* I assure you, we shall be very glad when it is all over, and we may go home."

Also saw Mrs. Jewett and Mrs. Bain, who gave an exhaustive account of their woes as *attachés'* wives. They must stay there at Nara, two hours from Kyoto; and have to get up at four in the morning, dress *en décolleté*, and at six set forth in the train, to be at the eight o'clock *cérémonies de rigueur*. This happens every day for two weeks! But yesterday Mrs. Jewett was prostrated with fatigue, and Mrs. Bain says she goes to bed in the middle of the day, when she can, and stays there till the ghastly *réveille* at four.

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And these are the poor creatures who are at present the envied of the world! If they but knew the truth—all those people who read the newspaper reports, and gaze longingly on the pompous circumstances of kings and courts and diplomats, they'd be like Henry Ward Beecher's man, who thankfully went back and shouldered his own old cross, after a disillusioning try at all the rest.

So, in spite of Madame Kollavsky's compassionate raptures, I'm resigned to remaining an outsider at the Coronation. Which by no means implies, however, my dear Nina, that I intend to be an outsider at the carnival of life! On the contrary, I mean to procure for myself a very good place indeed. Why not? It's all one can be sure of, and as Deborah says, one must take the cash and let the credit go.

I found a birthday cable from Bumble under my door when we came back from Nara. He *is* a thoughtful creature. You must make my peace with him, Glory, for

not having written him lately. Somehow I feel that—with all his comprehension of a certain sort of thing—he wouldn't understand this sophisticated atmosphere, and the problems that arise out of it. Bumble lives in a world of his own creation—a perfect world of truth and love and beauty, and all those wonderful theories that unfortunately don't accomplish much for a person in this granite workaday real life. I wish you could persuade him to stop wasting himself on insignificant local labour troubles, and go in for something big, that would "get him somewhere," as Eloise says.

There's a lot in that practical reasoning, after all. And at least the "bad quarter of an hour" which is life, has its moments. I thoroughly enjoyed walking out to my birthday dinner with Thorpe to-night under the envious nose of Mrs. Gorrington (who, with "Wilbuh," is languidly reviewing the Coronation); and showing Diana and Lady Gertrude that all was not left behind with Noel.

As Deborah says, a woman's business is to

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drive the love phantom out of her own dreams, and into some man's; if she wants success instead of heartache for her portion at the world's wedding-feast. And Thorpe was almost loverlike in his devotion to-night. It was Deborah's dinner party, but T. insisted on giving the favours—lovely little amethyst and crystal figures; and sent me a quantity of orchids, and kept cutting in all through dinner, if I talked for more than two minutes to Count Takahara, who was on my other side.

The Count went to school in England, and is quite European and amusing; and he has been rather attentive to us, as he's also staying at this hotel. I think Thorpe was a bit jealous; because, when I thanked him for the flowers, he said (quite low—we were on the balcony, and nobody there):

"There's only one thanks I want, but I daresay I haven't a chance—with all these counts and diplomats and other adorers hanging about." And for once he lost the

platform manner, and spoke like an awkward boy.

I liked him better than ever before—he's tremendously good-looking in evening clothes; and we're going on a moonlight motor party to-morrow night, and if he proposes, I think I may accept. I'm through with sentiment, and intend to find compensation in the more substantial benefits.

Yours, with determination,

NANCY.

Chosen Hotel,
Seoul, Corea,
November 28, 19—.

Life is going so fast, these days, there's very little time to write in diaries. Deborah is called to America, to settle the latest escapade of her exuberant son, Johnny; and will sail as soon as she can close her Tokio house—probably next Saturday, on the same steamer with Vane.

I wondered whether I'd better not go with her—but Deborah said it would be folly to

abandon the "campaign" so successfully begun, with Thorpe—and, like the master strategist she is, arranged for me to go with him and "Cousin Sara" to Corea and Peking.

Thorpe was jubilant over the idea—declaring with tender proprietorship that it was "high time I had a man to take care of me." While Cousin Sara (really a delicious little old lady in her poke bonnet and mitts) affectionately volunteered to "watch over the child as though she were my own."

So it was arranged—but awful, parting with Deborah. "Play the game, Nancy," she whispered, at good-bye. "I shall want to buy your trousseau when you come back to America, so don't disappoint me. Remember—you're marrying the life, not the man."

Well, I *have* tried to remember it, especially when Thorpe actually proposed—the day before we left Kyoto. Deborah had gone, and to cheer me up, Thorpe suggested we spend the afternoon in the country. Cousin Sara had a headache, so we went

alone in a motor—brilliantly clear weather, through a succession of leafy parks, with dim gold and black temples here and there within the pines.

It was Japan, as one's always pictured it; the trees, and the slim rows of steps, and the tripping, bright-sashed people everywhere. When we reached the falls, with the little peaked grey boats against the banks of gorgeous maples, it was almost too beautiful.

We walked along the path beside the stream, and Thorpe soon stopped lecturing about the scenery and began to talk with significant earnestness of his life history—the struggle to “arrive,” from a newspaper reporter on nothing a week, to the prestige of the most celebrated lecturer in the world.

Of course he didn't say that; but he described the life he now leads—travelling leisurely about, collecting material for travel-talks and books, meanwhile meeting all sorts of interesting people, often staying at royal palaces—and his home in New York (a

veritable museum of treasures), and his villa at Cannes, and finally—quite abruptly:

“Will you marry me, and share it all, Nancy?”

We were resting for a moment beside a little bridge. He put out his hand and laid it on mine—an intense, imperative grasp. “Will you?” he insisted. “Will you? I’ll make you the queen you were born to be—I’ll do everything for you—give you the world! You’re the woman I want, to point to as my wife. Say you’ll marry me, dearest—Nancy!”

But I didn’t say it. Why not? Because I certainly opened my mouth to accept him, then and there. But the words that came were: “Please—I’ve known you such a little while—give me time to think things over.”

The demure maidenly plea, as unlike downright me as anything imaginable! But the sun shone strong on his thinning grey hair (the bald spot was distinctly visible); and I thought involuntarily of Barry Brinton’s beautiful thick brown mane, and his

steady eyes and trusting smile. But beyond all this something within me—something deep and peremptory—stepped in, and positively prevented my speaking the final words of acceptance.

But Thorpe seemed perfectly satisfied, and said heartily, "Dear child, you shall have as long as you like—provided only you give me the answer I want—the one answer I'll take—when you do decide."

So that's the way it was left; and he's been perfect to me ever since—though he does rather expect one to join the rest of the world (as he thinks) and revolve round *him*. Not an easy thing for me, who have been used lately to sitting in the centre of my own merry-go-round!

However, one can't help admiring a man who's succeeded so brilliantly, through his own unaided effort. And he does surround one with a delightful atmosphere: a combination of intellect and luxury, social effervescence and good hard brain work that's especially appealing to me. I'm sure I

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should enjoy the individual, artistic society he moves in, far more than the formal, dull circles of official life.

For that matter, as Madame Thorpe, I could enter any or all circles at it pleased me. No more condescension from anybody, then! Thorpe travels in almost regal state—his man and chauffeur go ahead everywhere, and have whole blocks of rooms engaged and full of flowers for our arrival; and always special cars reserved on the train.

He won't eat in the diner, but has exquisite meals served us by his own men, out of his own hampers, with an elaborate patent heating apparatus. And coming here to Corea from Japan, he even lured Prince Ishimi (the Emperor's favourite relative) to breakfast with us!

It's a two days' journey from Kyoto to this Corean capital, Seoul. First a day on the train to Shimonoseki, then a night on the boat—landing at the Corean port Fusan, at the becoming hour of 6 A. M.—then another day of train, before one finally reaches

Seoul at nine the second evening. Prince Ishimi happened to be crossing on the boat from Shimonoseki the same night we were, for a post-Coronation visit to Corea. Thorpe has known him for years—since the Prince helped him in the old conservative days, when he first came to collect material about Japan—and they had seen each other recently in Tokio and at the Coronation.

So Ishimi—a grizzled military looking man of sixty—was very cordial; and when we landed at Fusan at that *triste* early morning hour, accepted Thorpe's invitation to breakfast, with almost childish pleasure. The Japanese are delighted to sample European innovations always, and Prince Ishimi adored the coffee percolator, and fussing round the various alcohol stoves, and even made the toast himself—on one of Thorpe's collapsible tables, in the Station Hotel's grandest sitting-room!

Then nothing would do but that we join him, in his private train, the rest of the way to Seoul. So we did, and it was delightful—

all rosewood and grey brocade in the drawing-room car; and the Prince was charming, and told the most amusing stories, and was particularly nice to me. He referred very flatteringly to my Audience, and the luncheon (at which he was present), "and where you quite won His Majesty's heart, by your graceful references to our Mikado and our country, madame."

Thorpe visibly expanded with pride; said "Yes, she's had one success after another, but now she's ours to look after"—and all but announced an engagement, in his eagerness to make the Prince behold me as already his possession.

He wants people to admire one—oh, extravagantly! But—it's clear to see—not for one's own sake, but as an enhancing accessory of his. All through the long day, Prince Ishimi was constantly made to understand that he was approving not Nancy Graydon—who had had a certain success in Tokio—but the probable Mrs. Belton Thorpe. But I really didn't care; so long

as he'd made it possible for me to meet and travel with Ishimi—who is one of the most progressive and interesting Japanese, and who told me a great deal of the inside history of Korea.

It's a fascinating country. So much more colour than Japan. I love the women's pink jackets, and the young boys' long turquoise grasscloth coats. The children, too, in their red trousers and bright jumpers, are ducks. The country itself reminds one of Spain: gaunt and brown and mountainous; with caravans of white-robed men, and bony beasts, straggling across the wind-swept roads.

Seoul is a jagged, primitive capital city, with fine old mediæval gates, and splendid great hills all about. The air is very cold and clear and bracing; and I have lovely rooms (thanks to Thorpe's thoughtfulness) and a real porcelain bath—in *the East!*

Also discovered Miriam Kennedy, married to the American Vice-Consul here—Anthony Seton. Miriam is lively and gen-

uine and attractive as she was in college; though there's a baby—the sweetest pink and white wisp—and from hints Miriam let fall, a good many worries and perplexities in the life of a vice-consul's wife. They get a scandalously small salary, for serving the government.

I should like to see a lot of Miriam while I'm here, but Thorpe isn't pleased when anybody else takes much of one's attention. When I spoke of Miriam's wanting me to stay with them for a day or two, he said coldly, "Go of course, if you prefer. We try to make you happy, but if you'd rather be with some one else——"

And Cousin Sara begged me, in a plaintive aside, not to "go against dear Belton, who is so easily upset."

He certainly is! Looks like a thunder-cloud if one so much as takes a walk with another person—man or woman; and was crusty a whole evening because I said I thought Ishimi one of the handsomest men I had ever seen.

This childish jealousy—concentrated egoism it is really—is something I have never known. What I'm wondering is: how will one enjoy attempting to mollify him, for a lifetime?

November thirtieth.

Thanksgiving Day! Yesterday, lunched with the Thorpes at the Corean palace. Ishimi is occupying during his visit in Seoul. A funny "modern" place, with oak hatracks, and petticoat lampshades and Brussels carpets. But the original old ceilings (carved and lacquered), and peacock blue tiled roofs, were really lovely. Also the grounds—wonderful trees, waterfalls, and picturesque pavilions dotted about.

We had lunch in the Lotus Pavilion—comfortably heated with open charcoal stoves; and Ishimi was very splendid in his uniform and decorations, and a delightful host. I thought he was especially *empressé* with Thorpe, somehow—these Japanese are

clever diplomatists. Probably Ishimi sees that Thorpe can be of use to him.

Anyhow, it was a very chic luncheon—lovely favours, little ivory and gold boxes with the Prince's monogram—and I do like the *milieu* Thorpe moves in. Money instead of being perpetually in the foreground, as in the diplomatic set, is relegated to its proper place as the mere necessary where-withal for purchasing the charm of life. And things run along easily, with a sort of cultivated informality; and there are other attractions I like.

But still . . . Well, the fact remains that he isn't young, and he has asthma (tried hard to conceal it, but Cousin Sara let the cat out of the bag), and—oh, the whole thing seems rather cheap and unworthy, sometimes.

To-day, after Thanksgiving dinner at the Setons (Thorpe went tiger-shooting with Ishimi), Miriam took me a long walk over the hills. We were alone, so she could talk

more intimately about her and Tony's problems.

They are madly in love—though they've been married three years, and have the baby and everything. But it's still the same, "only bigger and better," Miriam says. And she wouldn't change with a millionairess; though it *is* rather anxious, wondering if one's going to have a pair of boots when the wet weather comes, or if that money had better be spent for the baby's flannel petticoats, or a new hat for Tony. And if there should be more children. . . .

My own worries seemed very small and insignificant, beside Miriam's. Why, she and Tony and the baby live on less than my present shrunken income—and are happy together. I can tell by her face when he's coming up the Consulate drive; and to see him romping with the baby and Tum-tum, the little dog—with every now and then *such* a look at Miriam: it makes even skeptical me sentimental. I'm not sure even now that I wouldn't rather have simplicity and love

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like Miriam and Tony's, than luxury and the other advantages I want, with a middle-aged egoist like Thorpe. Shall I go through with it? Is it worth while, after all?

December second.

Yes! I am going to marry Thorpe. Letters to-day, from Deborah and Eloise, brought back all that life again. Deborah wrote from the boat, as she was sailing. Said she'd seen Eloise only once since the return from Kyoto—"she is very busy furthering Diana's suit with your friend Verrek. Oh, I can't wait to have you show them all what *you* can do!"

Eloise speaks of "Verrek's growing devotion to Diana," and laments the fickleness of man. "But it's the way of the world"—I can hear her plaintive sigh—"so what can you do?"

You shall see, my dear! And all the rest who pity me. There are men who can give one quite as much power as Noel, in a

broader and more interesting world than diplomacy.

Thorpe came back from the shooting trip, full of new plans. Prince Ishimi (acting no doubt for still higher authority) has asked him to give his Coronation lecture first in Tokio, and to follow it with a series of travel-talks on America and other countries, to be given at the prince's residence—just for the Court and the diplomats.

So Thorpe expects to return to Tokio, directly after the fortnight in Peking, wants to take a big house, entertain all through the season, and urges our immediate marriage!

I told him he took my breath away; but promised to give him an answer before we leave Peking. However, I've already decided. What woman could resist such a triumph—there in the midst of the superior little set that were forever trying to patronise?

Noel, too. . . . Perhaps when he sees one receiving with Princess Ishimi!—Thorpe apparently hinted a good deal to the Prince, who was delighted, he said, and "hoped Ma-

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dame would take a very prominent part in the coming season."

Which is equivalent, in itself, to a promise of high favour at Court. Yes, I've decided: I shall marry Belton Thorpe.

Palace of A Thousand Flowers,
Peking, December 12, 19—.

Deborah dear, I do wish you were here! You keep one's courage to the sticking point—and mine falters abominably sometimes, these days.

I ought to be the happiest girl alive; for here I am in Peking, the most enchanting spot I ever laid eyes on—staying in a really truly Chinese palace, all carved teak and white marble, vermilion walls and gorgeous faded tapestries, and leading a sort of fairy princess life, with the most entertaining lot of people, including many aristocratic Chinese.

Makes me laugh, the idea we Americans have of Chinese people—judging this enor-

mous nation by the handful of its lowest class, that comes to our country to wash our linen! Whereas those one meets here (even the intelligent middle classes) are the most cultured and highly fastidious race I have ever known. Here in North China, they are very tall you know—splendidly built, and with an attractive mixture of humour and dignity. Even the common people in the streets have a quite noble bearing, with so much character in their faces—like brown, calm giants, after the excitable pigmy Japanese. And I love their wadded green satin coats with the fur collars to the ears, and the young girls with their short jackets and perky black satin trousers.

When one meets them in society, they're the most delightful creatures to talk to—European wit is dull beside the whimsical Chinese imagery; and the most amusing party I've enjoyed in all my life, was the luncheon given us by Marquis Chung, at a *chic* Chinese restaurant, where not a European was present except ourselves.

The journey from Seoul to Peking was tremendously interesting—two days across Manchuria, you know. North China is one vast desert of graves. I remember Father had to buy five hundred grave deeds, just for a small piece of ground for one of the Institutes. And there is a unique rule of the Tientsin Golf Club, that “a ball lodged in a coffin may be removed, without counting an extra shot.”

A strange sensation, riding hour after hour, all day—all week, if one kept on—through these endless plains of death. Makes one think very hard about life. What is it for? There must be something besides just “getting ahead”—a success that’s like a pin-point in the ribbon of eternity. Why all this mad self-development, this universal passion to be somebody, attain to something, if only for a moment? Where does it all end?

Temporarily, in Peking; which, as I say, is certainly the most fascinating spot in the East. Clear, cold air, that tones one up to

the point of knocking the Great Wall down, if necessary; and the streets full of gay-uniformed soldiers from the different Legation barracks, and stately Chinese officials in motor cars, with armed men on the running board—very thrilling and bandit-y; and rickshas, and carriages, and wheel-barrows, and the famous Peking cart; all full of amusing people, apparently from every nation under the sun.

It's much more interesting than Tokio; they dance here, too, and ride—the dearest shaggy ponies—and everything is more keyed-up and zesty, like the glorious air.

Thorpe had sent ahead, as usual, to arrange a place for us to stay. But I think he is doing everything he can think of to win me, these last few days; that is probably why he took this marvellous palace (which must cost a small fortune) instead of going to a hotel for the fortnight we're to be in Peking.

It belongs to the Ling family—Prince Ling being now in Europe, as Minister to France. Goodness knows what bribes

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Thorpe used to get them to open it for so short a time—even with all the money in the world I doubt if he could have got it without a lot of influence. One exquisite succession of fairy courts, and “camel” bridges, delicate hidden gardens, marble galleries. And the brocades! My room is a glory of yellow, rose, marron, turquoise; with fragile, fine-wrought teak furniture, and subtle old ivory screens.

Oh, Thorpe is a master of “atmosphere”! What a contrast, this Arabian Nights luxury, to prosaic hotels—or Brinnsville.

And yet . . . a letter from Glory yesterday, told of Barry’s visit to New York—he stayed three days, and they had such fun together. Friendship and understanding like Bumble’s might make any place bearable—though I hadn’t the sense to know it last summer.

But one’s come a long way, since then. So, evidently, has Barry. Stumbled across a long article about him, in an old New York *Times*; which praised him enthusiastically as

"the ex-officio arbitrator of the labour troubles that have been upsetting the entire Middle West."

I thought it was only Brinnsville and Houghton, and a few other towns. But it seems there were sympathetic strikes in the neighbouring States, and Barry got a law passed—eight hour days, and more wages and all sorts of things; first for our own State, and then in the others that hastened to copy.

So his idealist's theories that I've sniffed at, were worth a good deal, after all. Perhaps if I'd had the sense to appreciate him before I started out on this futile search over the earth for happiness. . . . But it's too late now. Heard from him, too, in yesterday's mail, but it was all about Glow: how well she looked, and how prettier than ever, and how he expected her home in Brinnsville for the Christmas holidays.

Obviously, there'll be an engagement announced there, soon. While I—oh, Deborah, I am tired already of trying to play

up to Thorpe's greedy vanity. It's all very well to say one's marrying the life; but I begin to see, more and more clearly, there'll be no getting rid of the man thrown in.

Thorpe expects to be the focus of attention every minute—is piqued by the deflection of even a ray of interest towards me. A sort of elderly spoiled child, who insists on having all the toys in the room.

Of course, he *does* give one a thrilling kind of existence—introduced me, as I told you, to many “high-up” Chinese (he himself even went to dine with President Yuan), and all the Legation set; and John Larue and several other distinguished writer people, spending the winter here.

But what's the use? One daren't let oneself go, and enjoy it all naturally, for fear of suddenly finding oneself the centre of attraction for a moment—and so offending Thorpe. At the Griers' dinner at our Legation the other night, he quite sulked when good old Grier persisted in telling about “Mrs. Graydon's wholesale subjugation of

Tokio," and "*La reine châtaine*," and all that nonsense.

Mind you, he'd be furious if they didn't make a fuss over me; but it must be as "*your* charming guest," "*your* lovely young friend," "*your* talented Mrs. Graydon": always an appurtenance of *his*! Many little episodes both in Corea and here have made me wonder whether I'd really have the freedom and power I've imagined, as Mrs. Belton Thorpe; whether I wouldn't be, rather, a sort of decorative dummy—as he said, when he proposed: "the woman I want to point to, as my wife."

Meanwhile, his friends are certainly giving us a royal time. It's a succession of riding and sight-seeing parties, with dinners and dances, and receptions by the Chinese dignitaries, in between. Thorpe is in his element explaining the sights—the Forbidden City, and the Temple of Heaven, and the Drum and Bell Towers, and lots of other things: a sort of travelogue-on-the-spot. And he's really interesting, though a bit

long drawn out and "ladies-and-gentlemen," always.

Yesterday at the Yellow Temple, he discoursed for over an hour, in the freezing cold, about bas-reliefs, and Buddhism, and what Gautama really meant—while my nose grew redder and redder (I could see it when I shut one eye), and I had that horrid feeling of being uglier every minute, and unable to do anything about it.

A great relief to descend to Charlie Chaplin, with one of the young Secretaries, while Thorpe went to Chinese Parliament in the afternoon. I used to scorn the movies in Briensville; but they're a godsend, after days of high art and injured loftiness in Peking.

You know, Deborah, I'm not so sure about the unalloyed charm of this artistic set over every other. John Larue, the novelist, has a house here for the winter (getting "local colour"); and he invited us, with several writers and artists and a couple of Russian musicians, to tea on Thursday.

Well, and if that was a typical "artistic" party! Fur rugs, samovars, Buddhas, Sphinxes, incense, tube-roses—everything mixed up and messy. And several untidy-looking writers self-consciously read from their "works," and there was much talk about stealing plots, and the prices Gerty Chose *says* she gets, and "colour" and "*genre*," and "temperament," and "the high key"—you know, the usual "Bohemian" lingo.

Isn't it funny how they all—each different set of society, official, "smart," artistic, etc.—have their separate jargon; which you must learn, before you're really one of them; and their separate foibles and attractions—no one set superior to any other; but all balancing up about the same.

Sometimes I feel utterly sick of the whole scheme: travel, society, inconsequent chatter with all these casual acquaintances—however entertaining they may be—and *parties*! Is this all there is to live for? With an occasional thrill over beauty like Peking, or

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the wine of personal flattery? I suppose, in spite of me, I *am* still looking for the ideal. Anyhow, I feel uncertain, dubious about everything.

And it isn't fair to keep Thorpe waiting much longer. He's been distinctly restive the last day or two—spoke last night of having heard from Prince Ishimi, about the dates for his lectures in Tokio; and wanting to make definite plans about taking a house there, etc.

I thought I'd give him an answer to-night, before the dinner he's giving, in the gorgeous Dragon Hall of our palace. But for the life of me, I can't bring myself to say yes; and on the other hand it would seem almost criminally foolish to say no.

I'll never have such a chance again, to go to Tokio on the crest of Thorpe's importance, with Ishimi and other royalty sponsoring one's triumph; to say nothing of ease and security from this harassing worry about money, for the rest of one's life.

As you say, I suppose I'd better follow

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Noel's sound worldly example. Just heard, a moment ago (the post from Japan) he and Diana are engaged!

Very well, I'll follow suit and be practical. No good, at this late date regretting B—— I mean, regretting things that can't happen. One must just shut one's eyes, and plunge, blindly.

So I've dressed: yellow brocade, hair piled high, orchids, a cloud of mauve tulle. And now I'm going down—to what will probably be my announcement dinner.

I shall see Thorpe, at once, and accept him.

Yours very firmly,
NANCY.

Grand Hotel, Yokohama,
December 20, 19—.

Back at the starting point—and alone! What a different return to Japan, from the royal entry I'd anticipated.

Shall I ever forget that last night in Peking? All the gleaming glitter of an Occi-

dental dinner party, against the bold blue and yellow splendours of the Dragon Hall of the Lings. Great golden bowls of pale pink lilies, swinging perfumed lamps of precious jade and mother o' pearl, distant music—like dripping honey; and the bevy of European women, blazing with jewels, against the barbarically beautiful brocades of the Chinese.

It was all too theatrically perfect. I sat at one end of the vast oval table, between Thorpe and Prince Wu, with Lord Landon—the British Minister, opposite, and a visiting Rajah just beyond. And I kept telling myself over and over, "This is how it will be always: a feast of splendour, the cream of life, wherever one goes; and never any uncomfortable time to think."

I hadn't been able to see Thorpe alone before dinner, but whispered to him that I had something to tell him, afterwards. He understood, from the smile I gave him, that I intended to say yes; and promptly went into the seventh heaven of satisfaction and

excited gaiety—giving the broadest possible hints as to the reason of his sudden happiness, and all but announcing our engagement there at the dinner table.

He did go so far as to prattle unreservedly about “our” plans for the winter; adding with a significantly exultant laugh, that everybody there must come to Tokio for the house-warming. And Cousin Sara kept looking over at us, quite tremulously tender; and the whole party seemed to catch Thorpe’s infectious hilarity, and teased and made jokes, till by the end of dinner, there was a sort of hectic *furor*.

Then came the reaction. They all went away—as the crowd and laughter and excitement would always go; Cousin Sara too, vanished, with a discreet excuse. One was left alone, with Thorpe, the possessing lord and master; who with an expectant smile, held out his arms.

“You’re going to tell me—you’ve made up your mind,” he began unevenly. “You’re to

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be mine—*mine*, for the rest of your life, Nancy?"

It was then the unexpected happened. "No," I heard my voice saying distinctly—as though that deep, inmost self that had been fighting all these weeks, had suddenly risen to take possession of the superficial me. "I do not love you, and I will not marry you. I'm sorry for the wrong of leading you to think I would, but this is good-bye."

With that, I left him—crimson with disappointment and wounded self-esteem—and went to my room, like a person in a trance. Three times I had made up my mind to marry Belton Thorpe. Each time that indwelling mentor stepped in to prevent; finally barring the gate against any renewal of the scheme.

Alone, in the borrowed grandeur of my own room, I saw what I'd been conscientiously trying not to see, since the idea of marrying Thorpe first entered my head: how while seeming to be gaining a spectacular triumph over the world that had hurt me,

and at the same time establishing myself in a place in the sun for the rest of my life, actually, I'd be selling myself for a mess of most unpromising pottage—playing into the hands of the very clique I'd thought to conquer—since, even could I have brought myself finally to consummate such a sordid bargain, Thorpe would never have permitted one to be anything but a mere figure-head, with no scope of individual achievement or distinction—simply his prize possession, the mistress of his house.

Thank Heaven, when it came to the final decision I couldn't knuckle under. "I may never have a cent," I remember saying aloud, "but at least I haven't *him* for the rest of my life." And I took off my dinner-gown, and began to pack.

Early the next morning departed from Peking—to catch the first boat from Shanghai for America. The note I left for Thorpe was honestly penitent. I'd behaved badly; but not so badly, I tried to show him, as though I'd gone ahead and married him,

feeling as I did. I may be through with sentiment, but there's still enough self-respect in me to make some things impossible. So, having burned my bridges, and money at the vanishing point, there was nothing left to do but to go home.

The two days' journey alone from Peking to Shanghai gave one a chance to tally up and reflect. I had a compartment so small that I bumped my nose on the looking-glass in front and my head on the bunk behind, every time I stood up. And the slippery leather berths had no mattresses—only much-monogrammed sheets and a pair of elusive blankets; and one kept sliding out of bed and trailing the covers over the hot water tins that leaked—oh those were two joyous nights, so restful!

In the morning one woke to the smell of chow, which some twenty different Chinese neighbours were cooking in adjacent compartments. I was the only European in my sleeping-car; the rest Asiatics and the usual mongrel assemblage of Eurasians—

every colour from black to *café au lait*, and every variety of feature from Abyssinian to *Juif*. The dining car was impossible, both as to food and company; so for forty-eight hours I had to exist on boiled potatoes (brought back to my compartment) and my own tea and ancient Huntley and Palmer biscuits. You buy them in tins at the station hotels, and they've arrived at the grey and crumbly stage—but taste like manna in the wilderness.

China is an appalling country—the vastness, emptiness, desolation! Here and there, widely scattered over the empire, great centres of life and glorious beauty like Peking; but then, for days, barren sterility—hour after hour of blank brown country—not a house, not a tree, not a creature to be seen. When at long intervals one did reach a little station in the desert, it was impossible to get out and walk, on account of the beggars. Hordes of them at every stopping place; loathsome frenzied bundles of bones and rags, that swooped down, screaming like

famished pariahs. At one mud village, the dining-car boy gave them some rice cakes, and they snatched at it like savages, losing almost all, in their mad fight to wrest it from one another.

Why? I kept asking myself all that day. Why are these an expression of that same life that produces Chesleighs and Johnny Fargos and Lucile gowns and ivory figurines an inch tall, for which Thorpe paid a hundred dollars apiece, "to amuse people before dinner"! Is there any answer to the futility that rises up in life everywhere, like a blank wall?

Take my own case—what has it all amounted to: the thousands of miles I've travelled, the money I've spent? A few parties, an enormous amount of time and energy squandered in dressing—endless toiling over the rag and the bone and the hank of hair; for the sake of a little incense, an infinitesimal bit of so-called "pleasure," the occasional thrill of conscious power.

Perhaps that sense of power brings one

more definite satisfaction than anything else. But for every moment of personal triumph, haven't I had to pay an hour of depression, a day or week of heartsickness and doubt—when I seemed not to have such a success, or grew tired trying for it, altogether? Oneself as god is no more satisfactory than society or fashion, or any other of the idols that shift with every breath of a perverse humanity. And if this is all there is to life—this determined pleasure-seeking, why bother to live it? It would be more logical to cut one's throat; because the things one gets aren't worth fighting for. Certainly Deborah, my hitherto model, isn't happy; but flits restlessly from one thing to another, vainly trying to forget herself—and really loves attention, and depends on the world she likes to think she's independent of.

And I——! How I wish I could talk to Bumble. I believe he knows the answers to lots of things I'm seeking. Or rather, it's only one thing: the Goal, the Reason, the

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Climax—if there is any? In spite of oneself, one can't help believing in the hidden fineness of life, somewhere.

Meanwhile, a distinct anti-climax was Shanghai (where I changed from the train to the trans-Pacific boat): a big murky city, all ugly red brick office buildings, with cupolas and greystone lions and lots of pasty young men going in and out. It's essentially commercial and foreign, and disappointingly commonplace after the colour and charm of Peking. I was glad to leave, and board the boat; and have stayed in my stateroom most of the uneventful eight days to Yokohama.

If only one could have gone direct to America, without stopping! It is hard to face Japan en route—after all my dazzling dreams, coming back alone and bedraggled as I feel—with Deborah and Vane gone, Noel and Diana engaged, and not much comfort to be expected from Eloise. Fortunately, the steamer stays only two days here at Yokohama.

We came into the familiar green harbour late this afternoon, and now I'm established in my old room at the Grand Hotel, and have had tea, and the usual series of visits from Chinese tailors and curio-men. The room-boy built a roaring fire, and if only I could sit here and look at it, these next two days—or at the sampans out on the Bay——

But I have sent Eloise a telegram, and there's the uncomfortable prospect of a duty visit to Tokio.

British Embassy, Tokio,
December 21, 19—.

Of all places where I least expected to land!—which on the contrary I might naturally have avoided as I would the plague. Yet here I am: established for a whole fortnight in the British Embassy, Tokio, within literally a stone's throw of Noel Verrek!

It came about through that wonderful Lady Neff. Yesterday morning, as I was leaving the Grand Hotel for some shopping, what should I see but an unmistakable ma-

genta bonnet rounding the corner of Water Street; and then the familiar, humorous face coming towards me.

"Lady Neff!" I'm afraid my greeting was a bit hysterical—she looked so kindly and human and homely, in the real sense; after the strain of the last weeks, I wanted weakly to weep on her shoulder.

But she shook both my hands briskly, and said, "My dear, I *am* glad to see you again. We can't forget our season's star performer. And you've been enjoying yourself equally well in Peking and Corea, eh? And now you're coming back to us for a while in Tokio?"

I said no, that I was obliged to return to America immediately; and that I should only run over to see Eloise for an hour before sailing on the *Mandarin* to-morrow.

"But need you really rush away in such a hurry? Surely," urged Lady N., as we walked back to the hotel, "you'll not vanish ignobly without taking a proper leave of

your friends, before you go. Especially just now, at Christmas week."

"I'm afraid I must. You see, I've very important business in America, and then you know Eloise has other guests staying with her now."

"Yes—I saw her yesterday at your Embassy. But then why not come to us? My husband would be so pleased—we've spoken of you often, how charmingly you graced our stiff diplomatic parties, and your genius at organising the famous pageant; and we've all looked forward to having you among us again—at least for a week or two. Won't you come?"

"Thank you so much, but no—no I can't, possibly." Surely, I thought, she must see I couldn't—if she'd observed anything of the affair with Noel. She knew her world, and how they'd all delight in making one feel his desertion; to say nothing of pumping one about the sudden departure from the Thorpes and Peking.

But her ladyship stopped short, and fac-

ing me said bluntly, "I really think you should come, my dear. Your business can surely wait a little; and you know the successful actress must appear before the curtain at the end of her performance, or people may say she's not had a success after all. Which in this case would be absurd, and unallowable," she added, smiling down at me.

Then suddenly I understood! The dear old thing was giving me a sporting opportunity to make a gallant exit, instead of slinking away beaten, from Japan. She'd seen Eloise yesterday, heard I was *en passage*, and might even have come to Yokohama purposely to meet me, and invite me there—as it were into the thick of the foe—to Noel's Embassy! Wanting me, evidently, to make a victory of retreat, instead of an ignominious withdrawal.

It rather overwhelmed me for a minute or two. I *couldn't*! It was too hard to face—impossible. And yet——

"I'll come, Lady Neff," I said, holding out my hand.

She nodded. "Good girl," she said, briefly.

So she brought me back with her, an hour ago—here to the familiar big British Compound, opposite the Moat—where I came so often to rehearsal, and to gay parties in my former festive days. . . .

But it's no time for morbid reminiscences. I'm here to show the world how little I've suffered, not how much. And no matter what happens, these next two weeks, I'm going to prove myself worthy of Lady Neff's goodness of heart and generosity, and meet life with grit and dignity.

On Board *S. S. Mikado*,
January 18, 19—.

Once more en route for America! But that last unexpected fortnight was the most eventful of my whole experience in the East. To think if I'd missed it—through cowardice, and disgruntled pride—or if Lady Neff hadn't happened to have that master inspiration of hers.

As it was, how cleverly she planned things, from the very first moment. For a day or two I was left almost entirely to myself. She was busy about her Christmas shopping, knew I must want to rest and "pretty up" after the journey, so I shouldn't be bothered by callers or going about just yet. I was to make myself comfortable in my rooms (cheerful rose chintz, with those heavenly English open fires), and there were books, and the dogs, and Sir Francis and herself for company when I chose.

Which of course was exactly the respite one needed, to recover equilibrium, and gather one's forces for the general encounter with Tokio. Then we went to Miyanoshita for Christmas—just Sir Francis and Lady N. and I, together with my old favourite Dr. Hu. There couldn't have been a more ideal party, from my point of view; and Miyanoshita was a dream of beauty—a mountain resort about two hours from Yokohama,—many people think it the loveliest place in Japan.

There was a terrific snow-storm the night we arrived and Christmas Day it was a white world: the view of the mountains and pine-woods glistening with icicles, like fairyland—especially as beheld from the sunparlour of our comfortable steam-heated hotel! This again was just what I needed: the strengthening peace of nature at her peace fullest; and for stimulus, the interesting discussions of Lady Neff and Dr. Hu.

Sir Francis was always off on walks; but we other three would sit before our parlour fire—Lady N. on one side, busily knitting a perpetual soldier's sock, Dr. Hu on the other, his fine old hands folded in the perfection of Oriental repose. And between them, like a question-mark, my restless red head, bobbing from one to the other, so as not to miss a sentence while they talked.

I wonder, now, was it all so casual as it seemed—their pithy “impromptu” conversation? Looking back, I can see how much of it was pertinent to my situation, and how

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I took it in and acted upon it, more completely than I realised at the moment.

There was one bit, particularly . . . Dr. Hu was drifting along in his impersonal speculative fashion, about a Japanese dwarfed plant on the table. "Strange," he mused, "how man toils to surpass by artificially training things to be different—himself included. Whereas simply to be himself as he was created, is his grandest possible achievement."

"Exactly," Lady Neff chimed in crisply. "Be yourself. Here's Connie Wetherby (she tapped an English newspaper with her knitting-needle)—an old school-friend of mine—charming girl, talented, delightful; anxious to be a success in life. But Connie 'had to have' this and that—clothes, travel, society. She couldn't bother to earn them for herself, so she got them first from rich relatives, then by marrying a wealthy old widower. Now he's died, bankrupt; and at fifty she finds herself exactly where she started out. Always hitching her wagon to

some other body's wagon, poor Connie; instead of direct to the star of her own character."

"Perhaps she lost faith in stars." I suggested. "They aren't very sturdy allies, in this world that is always trying to beat down or get ahead of its neighbour."

"Get ahead?" repeated Dr. Hu—and it seemed to me there was a sort of gentle pity in his serene brown face. "But really there is no such thing as getting ahead, is there? One can't get ahead of oneself—which is what other people actually are."

And when I looked puzzled, and Lady N. glanced up inquiringly, he said, "Yes! The real Self, the animating spirit of each and all of us, is One. It is only the not-self, with his obscuring fence of name, possessions, and pride, who sometimes fails to see across your fence, and so through ignorance wounds you."

I thought he sounded just like Bumble; and I asked Lady Neff what she thought her unsuccessful friend should have done?

"Stood on her own feet—taken her own equipment and made the best of it. She was a natural musician—could have taught, and practised, and given her own concerts in time. That would have been a real success, honestly won, and that nobody could dispute or take away from her. One can't ride to happiness on other people's shoulders; one must stand on one's own feet, and walk patiently and honourably, every step of the way."

"And all this 'happiness,' 'success,' personal attainment—what is it?" Dr. Hu went on earnestly. "Simply the everlasting desire for self-expression. You in the West talk a good deal about self-expression these days; but do you realise that your only Self is sheer goodness, and that you will never be satisfied till you express that?"

It was interesting how they arrived at the same point—Dr. Hu by his universal Eastern philosophy, Lady Neff through her practical Western individualism. But in the end, the doctrine was the same: be your true

self at whatever cost, and so win your own rightful happiness. I was in the mood to pounce hungrily on every morsel of wisdom they let fall; and I can see now—in retrospect—how it influenced me, and shaped my attitude in the days that followed.

For after almost a week of this fortifying peace and philosophising, Lady N. took me—now ready for the fray—back to Tokio. Said she couldn't wait any longer "to display our proud capture." And I thought how different this was from both sorts of returns I'd anticipated: neither sailing in, "hitched" to the gaudy magnificence of Thorpe, nor creeping off home ashamed, on one's own battered and beaten obscurity; but—through having had the courage to respond to Lady Neff's invitation—now to make one's final curtsy as the honoured guest of the popular first Lady of Tokio!

And how she managed it, to the last perfect detail! Although, as I knew, her ladyship is none too fond of parties, she filled the rest of my fortnight to the brim. The

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moment had now come for me to be seen everywhere. Thanks to Miyanoshita and relaxed nerves, I was looking better than I had for weeks; and Lady N.'s skilful "leads" and my own dramatic instinct gave me the cue. One's part was that of the highly successful Eastern visitor, who had come out in the first place for the Coronation; but good fortune having extended one's adventures, one was now departing, delighted with one's visit and with the world in general—no room for anything but spontaneous good will towards everybody.

So from the first moment—at Nina K.'s luncheon, the Tarascon's masquerade, Mrs. Chesleigh's New Year's tea—I dispensed smiles and unrestrained pleasure, and generous comment concerning every one I knew. I can see that first party at Nina's this minute: the circle of animated Eastern women with their elaborate embroidered clothes, and their eager white faces—always slightly strained—alert not to miss a bit of news.

We were seated in one of those typical

high white Embassy dining-rooms, looking out on to the typical garden with its pine trees and pond, eating the more than typical *foie gras*, served by those same old solemn Jap butlers, in black kimonos and white cotton gloves. And with the first general lull in the conversation, that wicked Nina turned her green eyes in my direction, and demanded with a blithe little laugh:

"Now, Mrs. Graydon, tell us about Peking, and why you made it such abrupt adieux—and to those Thorpes, whom we all thought you'd annexed for keeps, you know."

"I had a splendid time with the Thorpes," I smiled back at her. "They were kindness itself, and I did appreciate their generosity in allowing me to travel with them. But of course nice things can't last indefinitely; and there were my people, and my home, and my duties in America."

A chorus of approving nods greeted this first passage! Then when Madame Tarascon introduced the subject of Noel and

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Diana, I declared (with a calmness that surprised myself) that I thought it an ideal match—both of them were so attractive and full of fine possibilities. And when somebody else went on to wonder playfully at my “cruel desertion” of Eloise for the British Embassy, I said no one who really knew us, would think of questioning my devotion to Eloise—my dear friend whose goodness and hospitality I never could forget.

“But for her,” I concluded, again smiling round on the assembled company, “I should not have had this delightful experience of visiting the East, and coming to know you all. It *has* been charming, and I’ll always remember Tokio, and every one’s kindness—but I confess that just now I’m very eager to see my beloved America once more.”

That was the “note” through it all. And I could see that people at first were puzzled, then disarmed. They didn’t understand—wondered if after all they’d been deceiving themselves—perhaps there was “nothing in it,” with either Noel or Thorpe. Eloise

practically said as much, during our one real talk alone together.

"Either you're very clever, or very magnanimous, Nancy," she sighed; after vainly trying to elicit "what I really felt" about the two gentlemen. "In either case, people like you—I believe, better than ever."

Probably, because I made no effort to be liked. I was too busy trying to do and say just the right thing, to think about effects, or Nancy. And I made a special "try" with Eloise, that afternoon I spent with her by ourselves. She was haggard, with all the strain of the official season—now at its height; and rather constrained at first—I suppose because of her assistance in the affair of Noel and Diana, and then the uncomfortable atmosphere of misunderstanding in which we'd parted at Kyoto.

But in face of my persistent friendliness, the constraint soon wore off—and something like our old confidence was established. E. was evidently impressed with my being "such chums" with Lady Neff; but sur-

prised, naturally, to find me back so soon from China, and on my way alone to America. Wanted to know "just between ourselves, what I *had* done with that fascinating millionaire—because truly I'd heard you were engaged, and coming back to set Tokio by the ears with your magnificence."

I said no—that I'd decided I'd rather have love like hers and Rodney's, and a few other happy couples I'd seen, than all the magnificence in the universe. "And if I can't have that—the real thing, why—I'll do without, that's all. There's always work—the war and all that, you know and——"

Eloise came over and put her arms round me, tight. "Nancy dear, I know you *will* find the real thing, because you deserve it," she said, just like her old tender little self. And I gave her a bit of jade I'd bought for her in Peking, and we both wept a little and tried each to shoulder the blame for our having drifted apart when I was with her before; and had one of those incoherent but thoroughly satisfactory, feminine clearing-

up times. Funny, how simple things become when one drops everything but the wish to be sincere. Perhaps then, that goodness Dr. Hu declares is at the root of all of us, has a chance to show itself.

As I was going out of the Embassy gate, from Eloise's, whom should I meet but Diana! We'd seen one another only to bow to, at a distance; but now here she was, radiant—with a new and somehow refined beauty—and she candidly confessed she'd seen me from the window, and had run after me. "May I walk down the hill with you?" she asked.

I was dumb, thunderstruck. What could she want with me, except to emphasise her victory? But she slipped her arm through mine, a little shyly, and began to talk in the sweetest way.

Said she'd so hoped she'd see me again, as she wanted to beg my pardon for many stupid meannesses of the past. That it had all been jealousy of my cleverness and fineness and charm, she knew she didn't possess.

"And you know when one's in love," she said tremulously, "one aches for everything to win with, and to make oneself more worthy of—the man."

Oh, she loves him! One had only to see the look in her eyes. And with the most sensitive tact—*Diana*, mind you!—she avoided mentioning Noel's name directly; but only said, with a lovely young humility, she knew she wasn't worthy, and had lived a selfish, useless life, undeserving of such happiness. But that she meant to prove her gratitude by learning and being all that would make her of most help.

"I want," the foolish child concluded ardently, "to become as nearly like *you* as I can."

I couldn't help a pang or two as I looked at her—so young and bubbling over with joy. Not that I was any longer in love with Noel—indeed I saw clearly now that the hurt I'd felt had been the hurt of wounded pride, rather than of one's really deep emotions. But Diana's radiance brought home

to me all I had missed in love generally. I thought of Barry—the riches I'd thrown away, when I started off on this wild goose chase last summer. . . .

Meanwhile I was telling the little fiancée how glad I was she was happy, and how I wished all good fortune to her and the lucky man—who I believe is a good deal luckier than she, after all. Bumble was right about Diana—especially when he prophesied, "Wait till she really loves!"

Of course, the meeting with Noel was not exactly comfortable, though he no longer made one palpitate. Lady Neff had somehow managed it so that we never ran across one another until she deliberately brought him to me, at her New Year's Eve "*At Home*." I was standing near the tea-table, talking with a group of young Secretaries, when I heard Lady N. say:

"Have you paid your respects to the heroine of the hour, sir? To be sure she's basely deserting us; but even these independent exploring American women are finally

overcome by the yearning for their own hearthstones. Mrs. Graydon, here is Mr. Verrek, pining to be congratulated all over again."

Yes, there he was: tall, blond, slightly pale under his coat of tan. And most of the Tokio *beau monde* looking on, acutely interested!

"I'm delighted," I said composedly enough. And holding out my hand to him, added: "I do hope you are very happy."

"Thank you." It was the first time I had ever seen him ill at ease. "So you're leaving the East?" he said with a constrained smile. "And what are you going to do in America?"

"Why—America is my home," I looked up at him, as naturally as though I had never dreamed of remaining—or marrying—away from it. "I've had a beautiful time out here, but naturally now I am eager to get back to my own people."

"I—mayn't I get you some tea? And there's a chair over here—I think you'll be more comfortable." He did his best to steer

me into an intimate corner, but I stopped well within ear-shot of Lady Neff.

"Nancy!" Noel exclaimed then, under his breath. "Why are you so formal—so changed? Can't you see I want to talk to you alone—to explain——"

"My dear Mr. Verrek (Lady N.'s rugged profile did lend one courage!) whatever is there to explain? You are engaged to a beautiful and charming girl, to whom you are soon to be married; and your one duty, as I see it, is to be the happiest man in the world!"

"Oh, of course—if you persist in taking it like that!" he muttered. "I'd thought you really cared, or I——"

"I care very much—for Diana's happiness," I told him, with a very steady look. "I had a talk with her yesterday. She is splendid, and—*true*. You must try very hard to be worthy of her."

With that, I gave him my cup, and a friendly nod, and moved off towards Lady Neff.

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Of course he was piqued. The Honourable Mr. Verrek was not used to such summary treatment by a woman. When I met him afterwards, he preserved an attitude of disillusioned injury! I believe the boy would actually have aspired to an "aftermath" flirtation—without a thought for either woman in the case, or anything but his own momentary pleasure.

Now, like everybody else, he began to wonder if I'd ever really cared, after all? But at least no one could cavil at my present position—on the contrary they so obviously approved as to make the last days of my visit a round of fêtes and pleasure. There were luncheons, dinners, and callers galore. Even Lady Gertrude capitulated, and made what might be termed a *visite de reconnaissance*. And Mrs. Chesleigh actually issued cards for an "Au Revoir to Mrs. Graydon"—she said she'd always wanted "to do something for me," while I was visiting the Embassy, and that I must excuse her for it's being so late in the day!

Well, that was an amazing fortnight. As I look back on it, people seem to have been miraculously transformed—or else I'd changed my spectacles. In either case, the results were far more satisfactory than the old antagonistic days of conquest and catty repartee—in which I'm afraid I used to join as much as anybody.

Lady Neff's brilliant climax was a large dinner party and formal farewell reception, the night before I sailed—crowning one with all the honours of an official "*beau depart*." And as the supreme touch, Royalty honoured the function, in the person of Ishimi! I can see him now—military and erect in his gala uniform, acknowledging my curtsy with his intelligent sophisticated smile.

"And that great brown China, madame, how did you find it?" He was discretion itself—never alluding to our last meeting, until I mentioned the Thorpes, and the pleasure he had given us all in Corea.

Then—he and Lady Neff leading the procession—we went out to dinner. It was a

lovely scene—about fifty people under the great crystal chandeliers of the British Embassy dining-room—the diplomatic men in Court full dress, dark blue with brass buttons, in compliment to Prince Ishimi; the women in their prettiest tulle or satin gowns, with here and there a soberer but exquisite Japanese lady in kimono. Delicate white drifts of January plum-blossoms decorated the tables, and the famous British silver plate did its impressive duty throughout the various courses.

Every one seemed to outdo themselves in amusing conversation and the particular wish to be charming and agreeable to me. They recalled the first tea-party at Eloise's "where you burst upon us like a beautiful white rose," Posada declared eloquently!—and the pageant, and the Emperor's Ball, and a chain of other incidents that now seem so long ago. And during their cordial chatter, I was glancing round the sea of familiar Japanese and European faces, gathering the threads of my varied Eastern ex-

perience, into a fabric rich with remembrance.

There were Madame Kariwara, the distinguished little Lady-In-Waiting, whom I met at that funny opera, and then later at my Audience; and Count Ozaki, the Master of Ceremonies who bowed us into the Palace on that red-letter day; General K., just beyond, brought back Kamakura—the moonlit night when he told us the stirring adventure of Tsingtao; and Baron Nimamura, with whom I'd Berlitzed conscientiously in this very dining-room, and who had opened his mansion of treasures to us in a marvelous dinner, entertaining us afterwards with sword dancing and Japanese music in his garden. At another table was Mr. Grelle, who'd unfolded the magnificent mysteries of the Japanese theatre, and often ran in to Eloise's to carry me off to some quaint festival I never should have heard about—how many novel and beautiful pictures came back to me, how much kindness and thought-

fulness I was tardily beginning to appreciate!

What had I done for them all in return? Why should I, Nancy Graydon of Brinns-ville, be sitting here now, the guest of honour of one of the truly "great ladies" of the earth, surrounded by her amiable friends? Whatever their failings I had so often criticised, they, at least, were here doing their appointed work as best they knew how. While I—what had I ever done, but dress and chatter, and run about to enjoy myself?

A tremendous longing swept over me to "stand on my own feet," as Lady N. said, and make something real of myself—something that the world would respect because it *was* real, and valuable and fine; so that it would acknowledge me for my own worth, not just as the friend of some other woman who had patiently won *her* place.

As I told Sir Francis in the drawing-room later, I'd come to see diplomacy in a new light this last fortnight—to see beneath the manœuvring and "tactics" and little

squabbles over precedence, that at first impress one as all there is to it.

And Sir Francis said, "Yes—underneath the superficial *petitesses*, there's a good deal of real fineness. Look at de Thierry, who's given up his Club, and the Montaltos and others their carriages—to contribute that bit more to the war. And poor old Lensky (whom Deborah and I used to laugh at for his mandolin and adenoids)—simply splendid to a dreadful wife he has in an insane asylum somewhere."

Mrs. Chesleigh, he went on to call "a dear good creature, always helping stranded Americans; and with all her proud 'Best People,' she'd make herself into a door-mat for Diana, or her husband whom she adores." While Eloise and Rodney were "a uniquely devoted couple, never shirking, but ready and eager to do their part.

"Oh diplomatists are neither more nor less wonderful than the rest of people," Sir Francis concluded, with his mellow laugh.

"They're just human beings—who are a rather nice lot of creatures, after all."

I had every reason to agree with him, that memorable evening of *adieu*. Ishimi shook hands heartily when he said good-bye; and declared, with a quite French grace of expression, that he was "*desolé*" that I could not be persuaded "longer to gladden this poor country of ours; but if you must go, our hearts follow you with good wishes as many as the blossoms of Japan, and we shall be waiting to welcome you soon back again."

There was a pause, every one had been listening—then a buzz of compliment and reiteration as others took leave. Messages, wishes, reminders—"but we shall see you again at the boat," many said.

And they did! It seemed to me every one I had ever bowed to, was on the dock that afternoon—with flowers, presents, *gentils souvenirs*. One's departure was a triumph, now, in the best sense. Eloise said, "You see! It's Queen Nancy to the end of the

chapter!" But all former irony had given way to affectionate pride in her voice, and she confided as she kissed me good-bye, "there's something in you this time I never saw before—I can't put it in words, but——"

"Don't try to," I said.

"The best of it is that we're friends—as we always were."

Then Diana—who had brought the sweetest basket of forget-me-nots—kissed me too, and thank heaven Noel had the manhood to say a frank and sincere, "it's been jolly knowing you—good-bye. I hope we'll run across you soon again."

That "we" included Diana—he looked down at her very proudly. So I believe he's come to his senses, and that *that* will come out all right.

Parting with Lady Neff was the hardest. I steered her into my cabin, alone, and tried to thank her for all she'd done. But I couldn't get far, and she looked a little queer herself, though she said "Nonsense!"

And that both she and Sir Francis were genuinely fond of me and expected great things of "a person of your intelligence and ability, when you get back to that splendid go-ahead America." They wanted never to lose sight of me, and some day we should all meet for a still nicer party than Miyano-shita.

The last to say good-bye was Dr. Hu. He looked such a duck, with an enormous sable collar framing his fine old ivory face; and I told him I was going to study, and try to understand and live his ideas.

"They are yours as much as mine, my dear," he said benignly, like one's grand-papa. "You have already gone farther than you know."

I told him he transfigured people.

"Only into what they really are," was his significant last word.

So, bells rang, and whistles blew, and I was left alone with my arms full of flowers; as the boat slowly moved off, bearing one away from Japan. The throng of friendly

Europeans waving from the dock, and the familiar little brown people and their little brown houses, the green hills and the mauve and mother o' pearl of a Japanese winter's early dusk, all wrapped themselves round one's heart strings, as they faded away into a memory. I remember feeling suddenly faint and quite weak in the knees. It was all over—I had left the East!

And now, in the middle of this tremendous ocean, I've a chance to get my bearings, and decide what I'm going to do. Can it be only six months since I started out, expecting to discover on one side of the world all the charm and inspiration I'd failed to see on the other side?

Bumble said I should find in the East all the wonder and beauty I was carrying there. But what did I carry there, really? What sent me to Japan in the first place but scorn of my own town and my own people—even depreciation of my parents, who turned out to be my "open sesame" in the "great world" I had mistakenly exalted. Sniffing at the

snobbishness of the diplomats, I was the greatest snob of them all—head turned by a little flattery, vain of my fancied intellectual eminence (!)—a pussy-cat myself, enjoying my small triumphs over Diana and the rest.

And then, everywhere I went, loftily picking out the worst in all the different sets I touched. Mightn't it finally have occurred to me to wonder if the entire world really was of no account; or if possibly there wasn't something the least bit wrong with myself?

I've been a conceited, blind little snip—a spoiled child, who at the first hard knock (my disappointment in Noel) began to wail; and to seek a peevish revenge on the world by annexing the prestige and wealth of Belton Thorpe! Thank heaven that in the end I couldn't do it—that that ruling innermost *me* refused to carry out the proposed self-exploitation. And most of all, thank Lady Neff for catching me on the rebound of disheartened uncertainty, and setting my feet in the right direction.

"Be yourself! Make your own success, honestly." Or in other words, stop this opportunist shilly-shallying, and get to work! My first task was that fortnight of reconstruction in Tokio; which began with dramatic instinct, and the determination to be plucky, but ended with a revelation of character—one's own and other people's—such as points one to a whole new vision of life.

All our lives we hear "you get what you give," and "with what measure ye mete"—etc.; and it goes in one ear and out the other. But then there comes an object lesson, such as I've just had, and these platitudes are illumined into the vital truth. The East and official life was neither perfectly ideal, as I'd expected in the first place, nor sordid and ignoble, as I'd thought later on; but you found exactly what you embodied—what you projected, yourself.

The snobbishness and false illusion I started out with, met further snobbishness, further illusion in the *affaire Noel*—and had to be destroyed; egoism and self-seeking at-

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tracted still greater egoism in the person of Thorpe, and was repelled by the image of its own unpleasantness; finally, generosity and the attempt to emphasise the fineness in others, brought back a harvest of kindness and unexpected appreciation of oneself.

As Dr. Hu once said, goodness and truth exist wherever there is life; and can be called forth just as promptly as meanness and antagonism. And the real "Best People" are neither a certain glorified set, nor—as I imagined later—a few rare individuals out of every set; the Best People are *all* people, once you've unearthed their real selves and thrown the false part away.

Isn't this the very Reason of Life I've been looking for—finding God, or what is good and true in people and existence everywhere? Isn't it what Barry's been trying to show me all along?—staying quietly there at home filling his place, while I ransacked the globe for the knowledge he had within him! I used to wonder at his understanding of the East, and diplomacy—things he'd

never seen—but I see now that of course he understood because of his vital understanding of all life, and its same principles repeated throughout all circles of all countries.

And I refused him—the finest man I'll ever know—for a “larger life” and “inspiring people,” and to see “the real world”—which was there under my nose in our own Brinnsville: the fine realities as well as the occasional false standards, just the same as in Tokio or anywhere! No wonder he turned from my shallow judgments, and sought happiness with a pure-gold woman like Glory. Moreover I was the first to suggest it, and I must be happy in it for their sakes. I *would* like to write and tell him how my ideas have changed—let him see my new respect for him, and how I've begun to have a little more sense in general. But no, I won't do anything even to jog the present *status quo* between him and Glory. All the better, maybe, he should go on thinking of

me as the superficial little snob from whom he escaped six months ago.

And for myself, the best I can do is to find some work that will take all my time and keep me from thinking about him. What I'd like, would be to go straight back to Brinnsville and do the work I shirked before—bring out there in my own home the fineness and congeniality I left it to seek; put my own inspiration into my own place rather than hunt inspiration in some other part of the globe. But Bumble—Glory—I'm not up to living there in the shadow of their happy union—for I'm practically sure they're engaged this minute.

No, it will have to be something else. Now don't blubber, Nancy. Love is to be given to the whole universe, not necessarily to one small package of a man. But, oh, my dear, if it could only have included you first!

20 Sea Cliff Avenue,
San Francisco, January 30, 19—.

Dear Bumble:

A thousand thanks for your welcoming telegram! It's tremendously exciting to be in America again, and see the shops and do the theatre, and hear all that's going on. Especially about you—why Barry, you're a positive celebrity!

Of course I knew you'd been doing splendid things, about the strikes and all that; but somehow I hadn't taken it in that in this sudden labour crisis, you'd become known all over the country, even to being consulted by the President!

It's simply glorious, and I hope he'll reward your fine services as they deserve. I've heard various rumours—is it true you may be invited to move to Washington? The papers hint there is a good deal of internal friction among the various heads of departments, on account of this new railroad upheaval. I know one person who would be

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delighted if you should come East to live, and so be nearer New York!

Rather interesting things are happening to me, too. Just as I'd decided to take up some definite work as soon as I reached America, I met the very person to help me. It came about through stopping here a few days with the Nelsons—the attractive San Francisco couple who were on the boat going out to Japan.

Amy Nelson is a very beautiful woman, who has always lived in San Francisco, and entertains all the distinguished people who come here. Not meaning *me* you know! I was going to say that through them I'd met Claude Merle—whom Mrs. Fargo calls the greatest living actor, since Irving's death.

Amy took me to see him in his latest success, and then afterwards had a supper party for him here. He was very keen to hear about Japan, and we got on tremendously. Mr. Merle is iron-grey and homely, and a man; not a lot of advertisements done into an actor. We've seen him at one thing or

another, almost every day; and yesterday he came to tea.

Amy was out, so I had him to myself for an hour. We had a great talk about the East, and diplomacy; and among other things, the famous pageant. I told him about our theatricals—my singing the Marseillaise, etc.; and he said he should think I'd be a great success on the stage, and asked me to sing for him then and there.

It was so sudden, I hadn't time to get frightened; so I did fairly well, though a little rusty from no practising to speak of since Tokio. But Mr. Merle took me quite seriously, and said if I had any fondness for the stage, I ought really to think of it, as a possible field for my voice and "great personal charm"!

I said I was ready for any good hard absorbing work. And Mr. Merle returned grimly, "You'll have to work hard enough on the stage!"

He gave me a card to his manager in New York, and urged me to see him, if I should

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decide to follow up the idea. I'd confided to him a little of my circumstances and present uncertainty; and he thinks the theatre is the very thing for me. Of course, only a tiny part at first; "but with your beauty and intelligence, you'd soon arrive," he said. "And then, fame, electric lights on Broadway, and all the rest of it."

But when he left, and I asked where he was going now, he said: "I'm going to the theatre, to play a part I'm sick of with a lot of young people with whom I have nothing in common. And that's success!"

Isn't it funny—the diplomats bored with Coronating, the great Claude Merle bored to tears with a stale part, and racketing about the country in sleeping cars and hotels—spending his spare time, as he said, addressing ladies' drama leagues, and listening to a lot of the self-conscious jargon that is talked about the stage. Yet, like the unhappy "dips," profoundly envied by the ingenuous world at large, as a monument of dizzy power!

But no amount of incidental boredom could daunt me, Barry; after the encouragement given me by Mr. Merle. A really truly actress—maybe some day a star! Wouldn't you be proud to split your gloves to tatters at my first nights, while murmuring the ancient: "Yes, awfully clever girl—personal friend, used to live next door to me."

Wait and see! I'm leaving here to-morrow, for New York, to try my luck. Sorry I can't stop at Brinnsville en route; but I must follow up this chance while it's "hot." Mr. Merle has also written his manager about me; and I can't rest till something definite is settled for the future.

Do hope the theatre scheme will pan out—it has such possibilities. Think of thousands of people hanging on one's every word. And the applause and press notices—all praise, never a line of anything mean or disagreeable—and best of all, succeeding at one's chosen work.

One could forget oneself in that sort of life, I believe, better than in any other.

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What shall I tell Glory for you? Don't
you envy me, seeing her in a day or two?

Yours with high hopes,

NANCY.

En Route to New York,
February 5, 19—.

Almost in Manhattan! After an uneventful journey, broken by a night in Chicago with Deborah Fargo. She was on her way to some Springs, after the recent bout with Johnny, and her returned prodigal brother. Poor Deborah!—a brilliant mind and fine generous spirit like hers, parcelled out among a lot of squabbling good-for-nothings tactlessly born into the same family.

We got down to deeper things than ever before. Of course I had to tell her about Thorpe: my realisation that playing second fiddle to an intellectual tyrant for the sake of money and position, would never make for happiness; and then how I'd come to see the futility of all that acquisitive self-seeking through other people, and had determined to

make my own way in the theatre—where there's opportunity for real self-expression, and a rich reward as well.

Deborah isn't keen for the theatre idea. All the woman-of-the-world objections: publicity, gossip—if I'd disliked the tittle-tattle of the East, how could I endure the wholesale slander attached, even in these tolerant days, to practically every woman on the stage? And then the precariousness of it—practically every actor out of a job two-thirds of the time; and one's health constantly drained by the taxing work and sheaf of disappointments that are the actor's birthright.

I said, "Of course there are detractions, but so there are in every scheme of life; and I love to act, and feel at home on the stage (that is, in the amateur things I've done)—and what else is there for which I'm as well equipped?"

So Deborah said no more. But I could see she was worried and perplexed as to what *was* best. Hinted that that worldly

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philosophy of hers doesn't satisfy her either; that she's come to realise she, too, must have something better and truer in her life. We had some quite serious conversation—Lady N. and Dr. Hu would have smiled to have heard me retailing Miyano-shita bits—and Deborah declared, as we were taking leave of one another:

“You've given me a new view of things, and I'm going to spend my time and money on something finer than gilded youths' follies. That great house of mine in Washington needs a bigger family, and so do I. You may hear of me adopting a whole orphan asylum—no telling. It's about time I also turned to, and did some real work in the world.”

I believe it'll turn out that Bumble was right about her, too—when he said she'd find peace in going farther than the social world, and identifying herself with the universe. How wisely he took their measure—all those people I'd only written him about; while I,

on the spot, saw them exaggerated or obscured.

Longed to stop in Brinnsville, on my way East—just for a day!—but hurried past, in a panic of fear lest I *should* see him and give myself away. How can women be such blind geese as I was last summer?

Well now, instead of love, I'm to have a career—full and absorbing, I hope, with at least the satisfaction that comes from hard work and gratified ambition. If Mr. Merle's predictions come true, one ought eventually to have success, and interest enough. *He's* played before the King and Queen of England, just recently. Some day, so might I.

Nancy, my child, you're raving. But who knows? I intend to work, and I've the American determination to "get there." It may be "Nancy Graydon" in electric lights on the Strand as well as Broadway!

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Hotel Alexandria,
New York, February 14, 19—.

Umm—that last looks very rosy; but I'm feeling rather dashed about acting, and the theatrical atmosphere. Three tries at the manager, before I even saw him. Once he was out; the next day, no time. "Come back Wednesday"—the actors' old refrain!

So again I camped for hours in the theatrical bread-line: an extraordinary hodge-podge of rosy flappers, and *passée* belles, almost-English looking men in Norfolk jackets, large blonde ladies in checked suits; who sat along the benches outside the sacred managerial door, scooting in with their photographs and press notices, as fast as the last victim—triumphant, or palely depressed—scooted out.

One heard snatches of "five months in New York last season," "George Cohan said I was the prettiest girl on Broadway," "my manager wouldn't let me break my contract, though the Shuberts were dying to have me in their new piece"—etc., etc.

Everybody tooting her own horn, in desperate effort to secure next season's bread and butter; everybody else impatiently tapping the floor, till they could get in and tell their own story.

I'm not very good at hanging round ante-rooms, waiting for people to be willing to see me. And then, after hours of those hard benches, laconically ordered to "come back Wednesday!"

I can laugh at it, once or twice; but as a continuous performance, no thank you!

Mr. Kirstein, the manager, finally saw me Friday morning. A solid, baldish, porterhouse and mushrooms sort of man—oozing prosperity, in diamond rings and emerald scarf pins and amethyst cuff-buttons. Really, he had them all.

He was very kind—looked me over rather sharply when I came in; but then seemed quite pleased, and actually took the cigar out of his mouth while asking me to sit down. "Any friend of Mr. Merle's," etc., etc.

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Mr. Merle had said I'd better lie a bit, about previous experience—at least say I'd played in stock in the West. But I didn't, naturally. I said quite frankly that I'd had only amateur experience, but that I was fairly intelligent, had a good memory for understudying, knew several languages, and had seen a good deal of the world that girls without such opportunities were inadequately attempting to portray upon our stage. Also that I could sing, and speak correct English—which alone ought to make one a “find,” in theatrical New York.

Kirstein has a sense of humour, and he smiled, and said “You bet!”

Then, after tapping his pencil on the back of his head for a few moments' meditation, said he had a good many new ones this season, and that they were always a risky gamble; but he liked me, and wanted to oblige Mr. Merle. He'd send me to his man, Einfels, who'd hear me sing, and report on my voice. If that was all right—well, there

were one or two new shows where a type like me might be worked in.

"Don't look so worried, girly. We may be able to fix you up," he concluded, patting my shoulder.

I wasn't worried. I simply wasn't keen—not a bit. Of course I know he was only professionally familiar, and that he was actually being remarkably nice, for a great manager to an unknown beginner. But—perhaps after all I *am* spoiled princess. At any rate, I like a bit more fence round myself than comes with this informal theatrical atmosphere.

One feels it all up and down Broadway—that matter-of-fact intimacy; in the shops, the eating places, even to my demurely inexpensive hotel on a side street—where I'm installed in the correct struggling young artist back room, with the traditional alcohol stove to cook my breakfasts.

Rather a contrast to the days of royal luxury with the Thorpes! But the journey home was so expensive, I have seriously to

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retrench; at least, until I acquire a salary.

Glory is getting four thousand a year, as Comptroller of the Kingsley Copper Companies! Lunched with her yesterday, at the top of their thirty-eight story building de luxe: Circassian walnut, Cordova leather, Tiffany lights, rugs that a century ago would have been thought fit only for a boudoir. And in the midst of all this splendour, our same star-eyed sprite, Glory, with her elfish mass of gold-brown hair; coolly signing cheques for millions, and directing an office force of twenty-two!

Not all the wonders of the East, nor all the graces of the diplomatic *femme du monde*, were as truly "inspiring" to me as our American business women—competent, level-headed, attractive as they make 'em—here at home.

Glow blushed a beautiful pink when I teased her about leaving all this importance, for a greater happiness that included someone else.

"You might have told me," I reproached

her, "I wrote *you* everything. And you've left me to glean just tiny crumbs of your great affair, mostly from Bumble's hints."

Then I waited—in one last selfish hope that she'd say no, it wasn't true. I love Glory more than anybody on earth, except one person—but now that I know *him* for all that he is, oh I do, do want him for myself!

"You understand, don't you Glory?" I said, unevenly, across our secluded lunch table. "Bumble——"

"Bumble is an uncontrollable gossip," said Glow, with confused severity. "Mr. Kingsley didn't want the office or anybody to know about my getting married, till the last minute. That's why I didn't write you more."

And even now she put a hasty end to my halting congratulations, and changed the subject—to the theatre and me. I heard her saying tenderly how worried she'd been, when I wrote those reckless letters about marrying that horrid old traveloguer; how happy she was now, to think of me finding

real congenial work on the stage, and how wonderful it was for me to have such a splendid opening immediately—when most girls had to wait round managers' offices for months, before they even got to see anybody.

She went on to build extravagant air-castles for the future, when I should be a "thousand-dollar-a-week star." But all through her happy chatter, I heard the one refrain: "Getting married—Glory and Bumble—it's really true—they're going to be married."

And, with a kind of forlorn desperation, I led her on to talk about him—his work (Glory's eyes shone with pride, as she spoke of a personal letter from the President warmly thanking Barry for the help he'd given the Labour department), his visits to New York this winter, how he looked: "He was terribly tired and worried last time," she said anxiously, "you could see it round his eyes. Oh, of course, he never said a word—you know Barry: a great big giant of quiet confidence, with an engaging small-boy smile."

Did I know! And I listened hungrily to every careless detail that she, out of her largesse of information about him, let fall. Sometimes I feel I can't stand it, to have Barry go on thinking of me as the superior little prig who turned her back on him and all the richness of life he offered, last summer. Even then—while outwardly scouting his ideas as quixotic and visionary—I cared for him and wrote to him and wanted his approval always. But it's since I've proved his worth, by comparison with the rest of men—and since I'm back in the same country with him, only a few hours apart—that it seems unbearable not to see him and wildly confess everything.

But of course I can't. He's going to marry Glory, and have her to live in his lovely house, with its big lofty wainscoted rooms, and galleries running round the top, and great open fire-places, and heaps of darling dogs. While I sit here, alone, in my ugly little steam-heated hotel cubby-hole,

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trying to banish this hideous loneliness with dreams of fame!

Nonsense! I'm low and unstrung to-night, after the shock of the definite news from Glow. Things will look better to-morrow. After all, I'm very lucky as Glory says, even to get the chance of a chance so easily. I shall stop whining, and be thankful for my blessings. Wonder what Bumble thinks of my going into the theatre? He hasn't written a line.

February twentieth.

Just home from my first rehearsal! Saw Einfels, the music man, Monday morning. Another Kirstein, only more so. Called me "dear," and asked me to undo my fur collar, so that he could see my "pretty little face." Pleased with my voice, however, and reported favourably to Kirstein; who told me next day he'd decided to give me a try-out rehearsal in a new play where they needed a singing girl.

He gave me the part to read over, and

told me to be on the stage of the Pompeiian Theatre Thursday morning at ten.

I was quite elated over the prospect of a possible engagement, so soon—if only the managers and people were a little more congenial. But then, I thought, one could forget all that, in an absorbing rôle, with opportunity for real, individual work and success.

Disappointment Number One: the play, when I read it over, turned out to be cheap and banal—the typical Broadway comedy, “Climbing to the Top” (!)—second-rate and untrue, in every line. My insignificant part being that of a supposed French countess, who alternates her conscientiously shocking songs with frolicsome sliding down the bannisters, and intimate conversations with the butler about her husband.

Such is Mr. Abraham Gertz’s (the author’s) idea of the titled aristocracy in general, “Countess Clarisse”—whom he refers to as a “madcap *grande dame*!”—in particular. I’m torn between disgust and laughter,

every time I read his ridiculous lines. However, determined to do my best, studied constantly for two days, and memorised the part, including the absurd tum-te-tum songs, before I went to the theatre this morning.

Well, and if that was a typical rehearsal——! One went in by the dingy stage entrance, up the dirtiest stairs I ever saw, and along a corridor where men in shirt-sleeves stood talking, with their hats on the backs of their heads, and horrid smelly black cigars in their mouths.

They stared, appraisingly. So did the group of commonplace people—all ages and descriptions, characterised only by a general “brushed-up” look, and concealed anxiety—that were the romantic folk known as actors. Some were old timers, others beginners like me; but for most of them the present rehearsal was a try-out, simply, and they stood about the stage looking one another up and down, in an attitude of suspicious hostility.

One girl nodded to me, nonchalantly, and inquired, “D’ja ever see such a bunch o’

rubes? What's Kirsty think he's settin' up?
A jay opera troupe—say!"

And her "friend," a languid young lady with a monocle and blonde side-curls, drawled that "the governor didn't seem to care how many *quite unheard-of* persons he engaged this season." And wanted to know where I'd been playing last.

They were almost funnier than vulgar; though as possible daily companions——! Then the first act was called, and—my heart in my throat—I obeyed the summons of my name.

Of course the star wasn't there, nor the leading man, but the stage manager—an enormous creature in a red vest—read their parts; while the long, lean, lemon-coloured author sat beside him, regarding each successive aspirant to his unexampled rôles, with an air of bitter disappointment.

When he beheld me, he scowled. "The Countess can't possibly have red hair," he informed the stage manager indignantly. "She's small and dark—Frenchy, d'ye un-

derstand? The idea o' trottin' me out a Titian doll like that—she'll spoil the whole play!"

Encouraging introduction for Nancy! And one had to speak one's lines above the din of stage-hands hauling scenery on and off, carpenters pounding, irrelevant people coming and going down in front—and making all sorts of crude remarks.

It was terribly difficult to concentrate.

The stage manager called impatiently, "Come, come, Graydon, pay attention—I am Clarisse, a countess gay'—play ball now, no fooling, get to work!"

So I did. And I wasn't nervous, after the first line or two, and I knew the part thoroughly, and thought I was getting on fairly well. But the minute I tried to tone down that preposterous Countess a little, and give her a few individual touches——

"Now, young lady, none of that stuff!" came snapping over from the manager. "This is a play, remember, not a pink tea. You gotta get that speech across! Listen."

And he proceeded to read it in the approved Broadway style—a combination of Bowery inflection and alleged Sarah Bernhardt manner, that all but upset my gravity.

However, it was easy enough to imitate him, and the second time he grunted "Good!" And even the author nodded approvingly.

For all of which I was duly grateful, because by the time we'd been over that inane piece about a dozen times, most of the women were in tears, and the men like thunderclouds, from the scathing criticism showered upon them.

When finally we were going out, wearily, I plucked up courage to ask the manager, "Then I'm to have the part?"

"Oh, I guess you'll do," he returned laconically. "Come round to-morrow, and we'll try you again."

Quelle comédie! It's not quite the same as getting up tableaux at the British Embassy! But I shall stick to it, and succeed, no matter what happens.

March third.

Two weeks of rehearsals now—and still no contract has been forthcoming. I've asked about it several times, but Löwig (that's the manager) always puts one off, or makes excuses. Cross as a bear too—the play's not going very well; but they don't "pick on me," as the monocle girl would say. I'm about the only one who doesn't come under the lash of Löwig's daily drubbings.

To-day, when I passed him, leaving the theatre, I asked again, "What about that contract?"

"Hm—you *are* the persistent one! Well, I'll see about it to-morrow." He was hurrying after Gertz—the unhappy author, with whom he's barely on speaking terms now—when I asked him,

"How much will I get?"

"We'll discuss all that to-morrow. But this ain't no three hundred a week job, y'know," he said significantly. "You're a good worker, and a good looker too; but

don't expect a Julia Marlowe salary for your first engagement, my dear, because you won't get it!"

And giving me a not unfriendly pat on the shoulder—like Kirstein—he went off, calling back the reminder that I was to be prompt for rehearsal to-morrow at ten.

And he'll have my contract! Can I really sign it—go on with this sort of life? If I break off with these people, it simply means weeks or months of working up to the same or similar unsatisfactory beginnings—I see now that it must take years to gain the distinction and resulting environment Mr. Merle enjoys. Meanwhile, this vulgar, second-rate atmosphere, surrounded by people like Kirstein and Einfels and Löwig with his red vest, and that gum-chewing "Gwladys" and "Ermyntrode"(!); grinding out rehearsals like these past two weeks—tears, scenes, that degrading bawling of last names; "Graydon, do this, Graydon sing that"—racketing about with them perhaps

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for a whole year of one and two night stands!

On the other hand, here I am with, technically speaking, a remarkable chance for a beginner, and in a "Kirstein Company"—one's already learned the prestige that implies on Broadway. Of course I'd have preferred even the tiniest part with a company like Mr. Merle's—or of that calibre; but novices can't be choosers. I know I have talent, or Mr. Merle would never have bothered with me at all; to say nothing of prophesying that I'd soon "arrive"—at recognition, fame, and all the rest of it.

And I remember his wise counsel about learning as many parts as one can, in each play; so as to throw oneself into the breach in emergencies. There are all sorts of unexpected opportunities, he said—his success, he owes to having been able to go on with the lines of a principal who dropped dead upon the stage. If I work hard, and keep my head under all conditions, undoubtedly my

big chance will come to me. This foolish Countess Clarisse is only a stop-gap.

I'll take the bit in my teeth, and close with Kirstein to-morrow.

March fifth.

But I didn't. Nobody did. For when I reached the theatre yesterday morning, courage screwed up to sign the momentous paper, I found no stage-manager, no author—least of all any contract!—nothing but a terse typewritten notice, stating that "The management had decided, for various considerations, to take the comedy 'Climbing to the Top,' out of rehearsal. Therefore the services of the ladies and gentlemen on trial for the cast of this play, would no longer be required."

"Dished!" said a man standing near me.

"Oh, it was a rotten play. I've known for two days he was gonna bounce us," returned another, with a stoical shrug.

I turned away from the little group of curiously dispassionate actors round the fa-

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tal notice—and left the theatre; starting to walk towards the Avenue—anywhere.

I was stunned—incredulous. After all that struggle yesterday, and having nerved oneself finally to go through with the thing—resolved to be game, and “make good,” whatever the cost—now to find oneself “dished,” as that man said—left stranded, to begin all over again! No wonder the manager had put me off, from day to day—and that contemptible sham about signing a contract this morning. I felt utterly sick at heart, about the theatre, Bumble, everything. Start in once more going the rounds of those obnoxious fat managers? Swallow their familiarity, endure another set of barnstorming rehearsals, with another lot of cheap chorus-girls—only perhaps to repeat this present experience of being thrown out, unwanted, in the end?

I couldn't! Simply hadn't the courage. I felt weak as a cat; without an atom of energy in me. The whole thing gone for noth-

ing! Oh, to have been able to throw oneself into Barry's arms and forget everything!

But that was impossible. And because of it, was I going to play the coward, and wail—as I'd done hitherto when things went against me? Once again was I going to shirk things because they were hard? Always, I'd backed down from my chosen position when difficulties appeared, and cast about for some other easier way out of the problems of living.

"If you have an ounce of character or backbone in you, Nancy Graydon," I told myself vehemently, "you'll go on for once with what you've undertaken to do—regardless of success, or anything but the sheer honest effort of it. You'll stop gauging satisfaction by success, at all; and look for it in proving your own strength and steadfastness. You'll start in to-morrow morning to hunt another acting job, and what's more you'll not begin playing the snob all over again in the theatre, but you'll look for and find those Best People here as well as in

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Tokio. What's the good of all your precious philosophising if you can't apply it at the very first test?"

"I *will* apply it," I promised myself wholeheartedly. "I'll begin all over again, tomorrow morning, and in a new spirit. At least I can live the sort of woman that would make Bumble proud of me."

At which moment, turning into my hotel, I ran straight into Bumble himself! Nearly fainted, when I caught sight of him—like a big, grey-eyed giant as Glory said—filling the diminutive lobby.

When he saw me, that compelling boy's smile of his seemed to spread all over him. He dropped his bag, hat, and overcoat in the middle of anywhere; and came to meet me, in two strides.

"Nancy!" was all he said—but my heart sang a whole *Magnificat*.

Though for some absurd reason, I couldn't say a word; but stood staring up at him, incredulously. At last, "It's really you," I managed to stammer. "I was just

thinking—wishing you'd—wanting to see you, you know. It doesn't seem quite possible——”

Bumble laughed like a child. “It is, though,” he cried joyously, “I came direct from the train. Glory told me——”

Glory! My heart stopped beating. Of course! He had come to see her—they were engaged, going to be married. Perhaps very soon; at any rate, I must not say a word to disturb his happiness.

“Come into this little sitting-room,” I said faintly, leading the way to the deserted hotel parlour; “then you can tell me about everything.”

“First,” said Bumble, when we were seated on a stiff plush sofa, together, “you tell me—what about the theatre?”

“The theatre—oh! yes,” I began confusedly. “Well, I’ve had most awfully good luck. Kirstein, the great manager, you know, offered me a part in a new play by Gertz—the one who wrote ‘The Flyaway Girl’ and all those Broadway successes. I

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—I've been rehearsing for two weeks. They promised to have my contract at the theatre, ready to sign to-day. It's a wonderful chance—limitless opportunities for the future. I'm quite the most fortunate girl in the world—oh everything's going beautifully with me!"

I rattled on, about Mr. Merle's sanguine prophecies, Einfeld's compliments about my voice, Mr. Kirstein's interest, trying to paint a glowing if fictitious picture, that would set Bumble's mind at rest about me.

"Isn't it all quite miraculous?" I continued, trying to sparkle with natural delight. "And won't you be proud of me when I'm a celebrity, and you come to clap my triumphs—there'll be curtain calls and speeches, and receptions on the stage on first nights, and——"

Finally, my chatter faltered—ran down. Bumble, I thought, was strangely silent. After a few perfunctory rejoinders, he sat regarding me dumbly; and I thought, all of

a sudden, of what Glory said—he looked tired and older.

“Of course!” It came to me, then: “You have no ears for all this stage nonsense. You want to talk about Glory. She’s looking so lovely, Barry. I never saw her as radiantly beautiful. But that’s natural, since——

“She told me of the approaching marriage,” I broke off, trying with all my might to speak lightly. “I do hope you’ll be very, very happy, Bumble.” And I held out my hand to him, praying I shouldn’t weep the next minute.

Bumble clasping my hand tight, looked utterly bewildered. Then, his face suddenly illumined, burst out laughing, like a boy.

“You thought Glory was going to marry me?” he exclaimed, not quite steadily for all his amused relief. “You thought I was in love with—going to marry Glory?”

“Why yes, of course. She as good as told me—but she said Mr. Kingsley didn’t want people to know until——”

“You darling silly,” Bumble declared ex-

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citedly. "Why it's Kingsley Glow's going to marry—didn't you know? She's been engaged to him over a year. Told me last month, when I was on here. I supposed she'd written you long ago."

I looked at him, for a moment, speechless; then crumpled up in a heap against his arm.

It was only for a moment—and thank heaven no one comes in that parlour room in the morning; because Bumble threw discretion to the wind, put both his arms round me then, like a circle of steel to shut out all the world, while he said he'd never loved any one but me, since the days of our enchanted wood.

"When you refused to marry me, and went away—I wanted to go out and carry you off that boat by main force. I knew I could make you love me, but you had a right to your own plan of development. So I let you go."

"But Barry, you wrote—you spoke so

much of Glory,—how could I help thinking——”

“Because I wanted to keep out of your way, dear, don’t you see? I wanted you to think I was happy, seeing much of Glory, or anybody—just so that you wouldn’t be bothered or worried about me.

“It wasn’t easy,” he continued, abruptly. “To know you were out there, ten thousand miles off, with dozens of brilliant men in love with you, yes and you in love, yourself——”

“You knew then, about Verrek?”

“How could I help it? Women aren’t the only lovers who have intuition. I read between the lines of your letters, not only about Verrek, either.”

“I did think I cared for him, Bumble—he was interesting and charming and then he adored me. But when I’d seen that it was only a fleeting fancy—that it evaporated with my money—why, then, I’m afraid I was disgustingly human and longed for the revenge of showing him and all his world

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my real power. So I planned to marry a millionaire—Belton Thorpe. You guessed that, too?"

Bumble nodded, with a kind of pent-up fierceness. "Of course! It made me crazy—to think of you, out there alone, worried, without money—perhaps selling yourself for the rest of your life out of sheer panic. And then, when you did come back, and I was planning to take the first train to you, here came this theatre scheme——"

"It was only to try to forget you! By that time, I'd come to my senses. I knew you were the one man to make me happy, but I thought you were already engaged to Glow!"

"All the while I was half out of my mind, thinking I'd lost you for good this time—to a career!" He smiled down at me, with a rueful humour, brown hair all rumpled up, eyes tenderly shining.

"Barry, you are outrageously attractive!" I sighed, beatifically. "But why on earth didn't you write? I've not had a line from

you since I landed, except that telegram."

"A man can't write, when the heart's gone out of him. I thought you'd perhaps be glad to see me again—that you'd come to Brinnsville, and I'd have a chance to win you yet. But you sailed blithely by, without stopping, apparently caring for nothing now except this theatre idea.

"I gave up then. Couldn't write—didn't care much what became of me. Then last night I was re-reading your letter—about forgetting yourself, by going on the stage; all through there was an undercurrent of unhappiness. I decided I'd come to New York and see for myself—if by any shadow of a doubt I could get you yet. Found out your address from Glory, and here I am!"

"Thank God!" I whispered fervently. "If you knew how I was longing for you—at the very minute you came."

"But Nancy," he broke in anxiously, "what about this theatre business—this contract and everything? Are you really——"

"It was all a made-up story—or most of

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it was. The play's been taken off—I was going to start all over again hunting a part. Only I wanted you to be happy about me, too, you see—so I invented all that.”

“Darling! What bats we’ve been, both of us! But now—you’re sure you do love me, nobody but me, Nancy?”

“Cross my heart!” I assured him tremulously. Though I don’t wonder you ask—the way I sniffed at your ideas, and at Brinnsville, and went off to the other end of the earth to find the happiness I might have had with you, there at home. But oh Bumble, I see now—all you said about the same satisfaction to be got out of work and people and the wonders of the world, in whatever corner of it one happens to be. And all I ask for the rest of my days is just you—and Brinnsville!”

And the dingy hotel sitting-room was suddenly a place of light—shining and full of song—as our lips met, for one supreme still moment.

Then Bumble suggested, eyes dancing,

"But it may not always be Brinnsville, you know. Couldn't you—if later on the chance should come—be happy with me in Washington?"

"*Could* I—please, Barry," I demanded ecstatically, "don't you think we might get married—say Friday or Saturday?"

"Make it Friday," urged Barry, as he kissed me.

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